



KIM HUTCHISON • KARI CASTOR • MIKE KROME
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VOL. 1 | Cov A

#1
OF 5

Shahrzad

KIM HUTCHISON
KARI CASTOR
MIKE KROME
NEI RUFFINO





#1
OF 5



Vol. 1 | Cov B

KIM HUTCHISON
KARI CASTOR
MIKE KROME
NEI RUFFINO

Shahrazad



Shahrazad

VOLUME ONE

STORY BY:
TOM HUTCHISON, KIM HUTCHISON, KARI CASTOR,
WITH AARON CASTOR AND BRETT CATE

WRITTEN BY:
KIM HUTCHISON AND KARI CASTOR

PENCILS BY:
MIKE KROME

COLORS BY:
NEI RUFFINO

LETTERING BY:
HDE

A BIG DOG INK PRODUCTION
SHAHRAZAD CREATED BY
TOM HUTCHISON AND BRETT CATE,
WITH CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM J. SCOTT CAMPBELL



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MIKE KROME
& NEI RUFFINO



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BY -
SIYA OUM



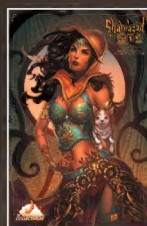
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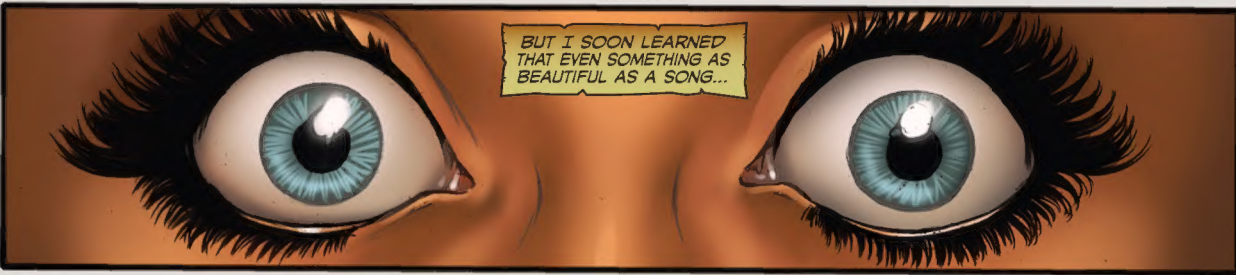
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WHEN I WAS YOUNG,
I LOVED TO SING
TO MY SISTER.

BUT I SOON LEARNED
THAT EVEN SOMETHING AS
BEAUTIFUL AS A SONG...



...COULD BRING
DISASTER...



...COULD CHANGE
THE WHOLE COURSE
OF A LIFE.

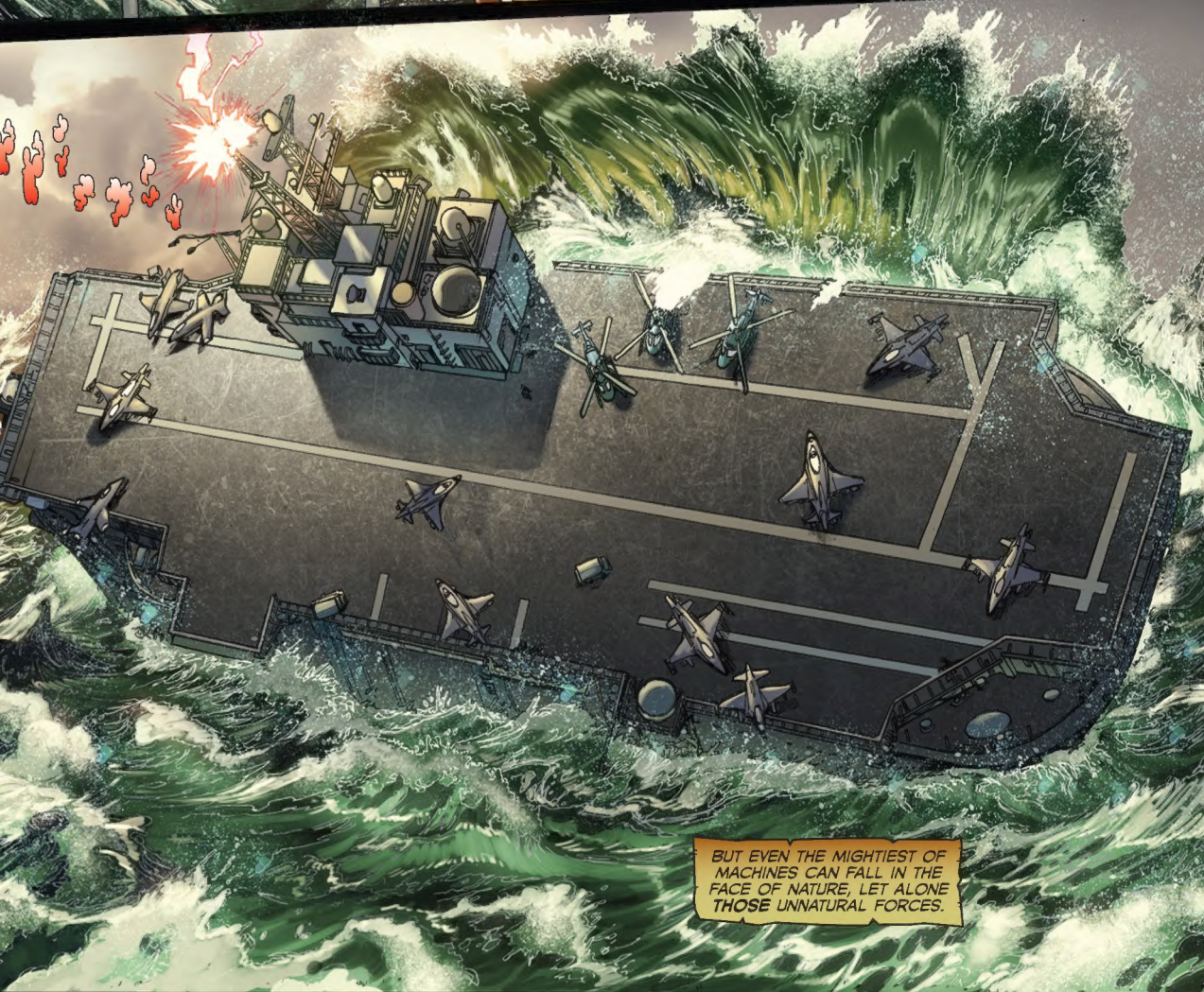
BUT THAT WAS
THE TIME BEFORE.



THIS IS NOT THAT STORY.
THIS TALE UNRAVELS MANY
YEARS LATER, WITH A VERY
DIFFERENT SONG.

THE CYCLOPS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE UNSINKABLE. A MAMMOTH BEAST OF STEEL AND ENERGY.

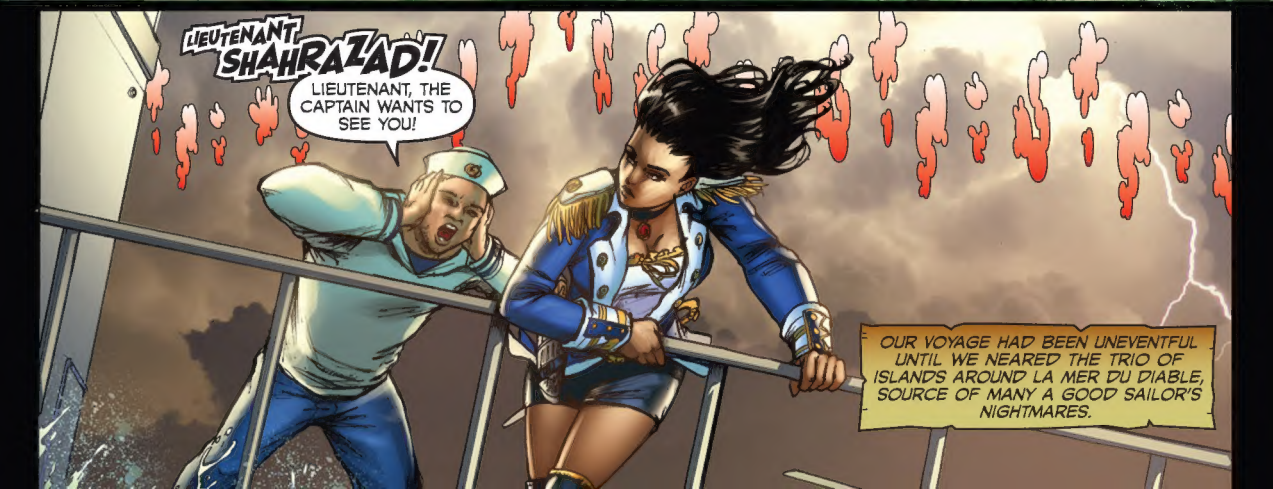
HOW CAN MERE WHISPERS ON THE WIND BE SO DESTRUCTIVE?



BUT EVEN THE MIGHTIEST OF MACHINES CAN FALL IN THE FACE OF NATURE, LET ALONE THOSE UNNATURAL FORCES.

LIEUTENANT SHAHRAZAD!

LIEUTENANT, THE CAPTAIN WANTS TO SEE YOU!



OUR VOYAGE HAD BEEN UNEVENTFUL UNTIL WE NEARED THE TRIO OF ISLANDS AROUND LA MER DU DIABLE, SOURCE OF MANY A GOOD SAILOR'S NIGHTMARES.

THE STORM, RAGING FOR HOURS NOW, HAD BEGUN AS WE APPROACHED THAT MYSTERIOUS LATITUDE.

ARRRGHHH!

WITH IT HAD COME THE STRANGE, KEENING SONG UPON THE WIND THAT DROVE MY CREWMATES MAD WITH AGONY.

THEY'D DISCOVERED THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THEIR WITS WAS TO BLOCK OUT THE SOUND AS BEST THEY COULD.

ENSIGN!
WHAT'S WRONG?
WHERE ARE YOUR
EARPLUGS?

THAT NOISE...
THAT MUSIC...
IT HURTS!

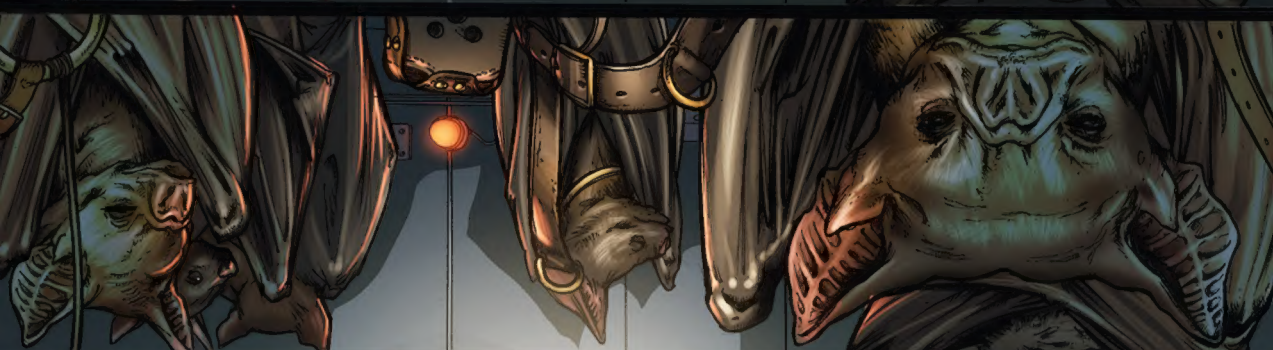
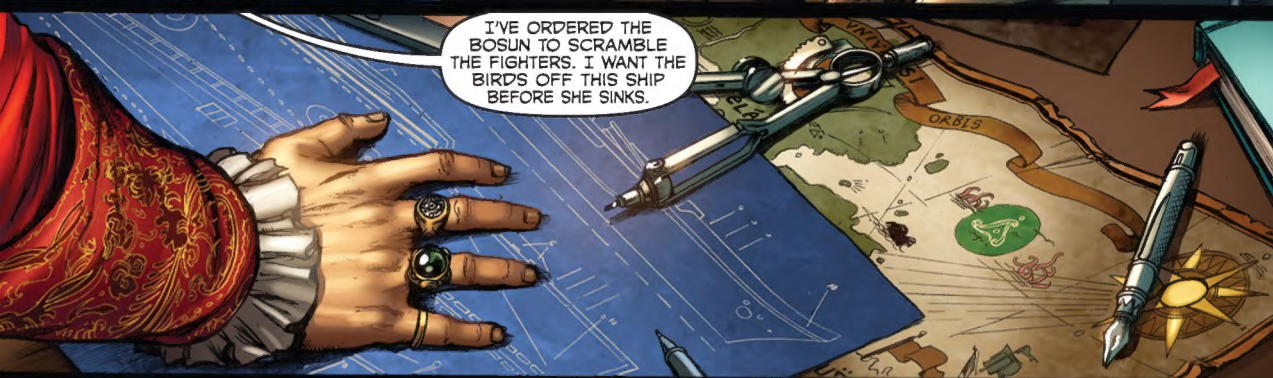
I'LL NEVER KNOW
WHAT THOSE POOR
SOULS HEARD THAT
DAY.

I'M FINE,
LIEUTENANT. THE
CAPTAIN NEEDS
YOU -- GO!

THE SOUND...IT'S SO
BEAUTIFUL, BUT IT HURTS! I
CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!

MAKE IT
Stooooooooop!

THE SONGS THAT WERE SCREAMING
LULLABIES OF DEATH TO OTHERS
WERE MERELY WHISPERED ANNOYANCES
TO ME.

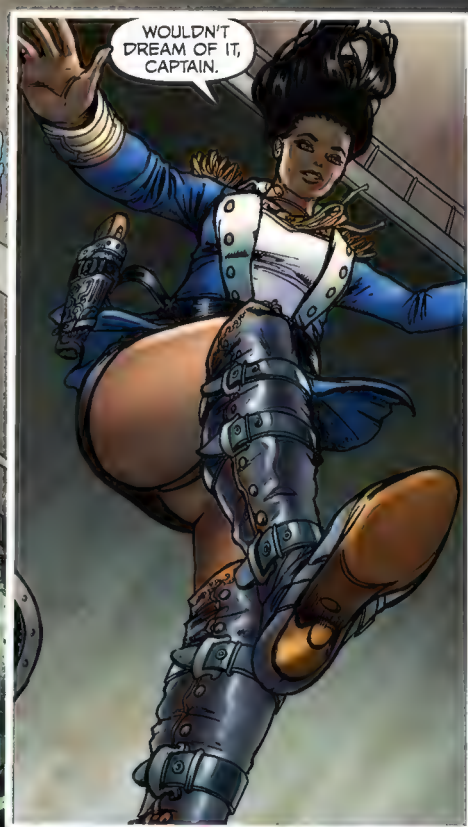




COME
ON, LAD!
JUMP!

THIS ENDED THE CYCLOPS' STORY, BUT NOT THAT OF HER CREW.





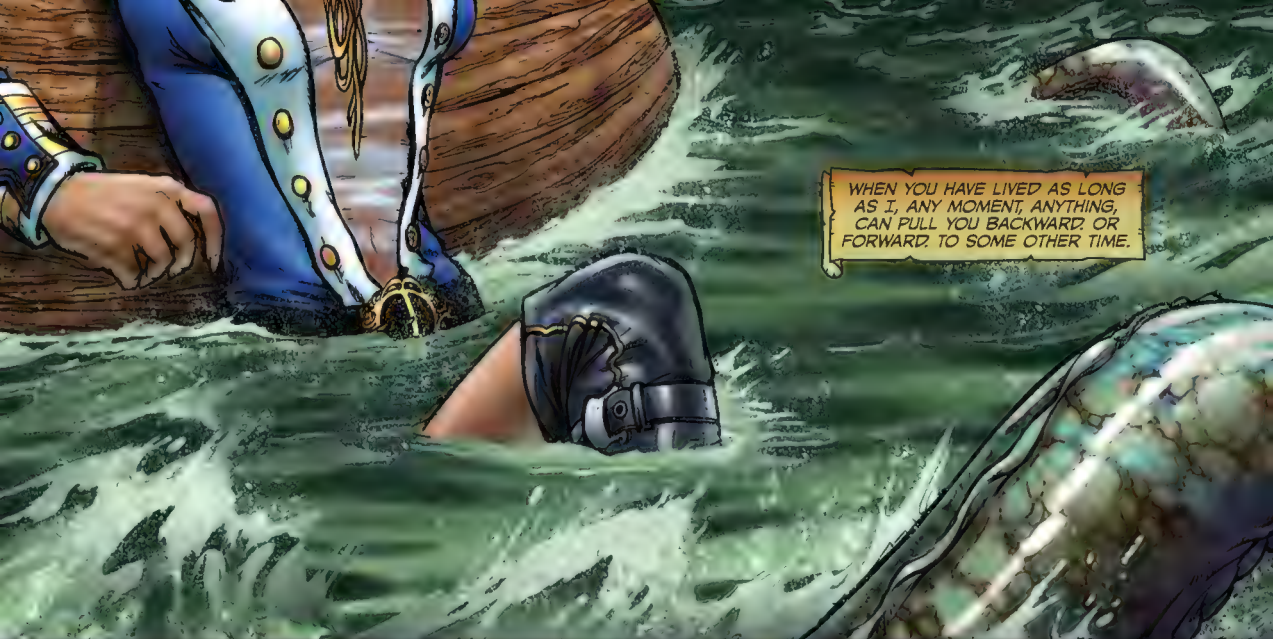
IT IS TOLD, O NOBLE READER,
THAT ONCE, THERE WAS A GIRL
WHO'D DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT
THE SISTER SHE LOVED...

HOLD ON
TO THE BOAT,
MIDSHIPMAN.

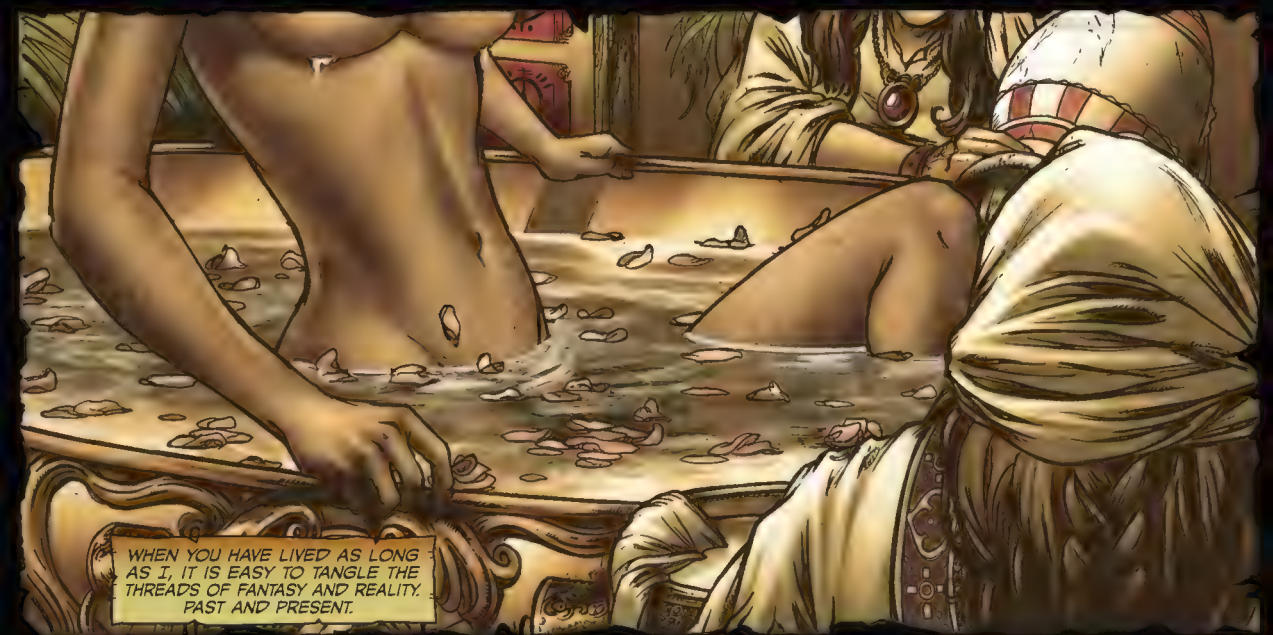


...AND WHO FOUND HERSELF
CALLED UPON TO PROTECT
HER FROM EVIL.





WHEN YOU HAVE LIVED AS LONG
AS I, ANY MOMENT, ANYTHING,
CAN PULL YOU BACKWARD OR
FORWARD TO SOME OTHER TIME.



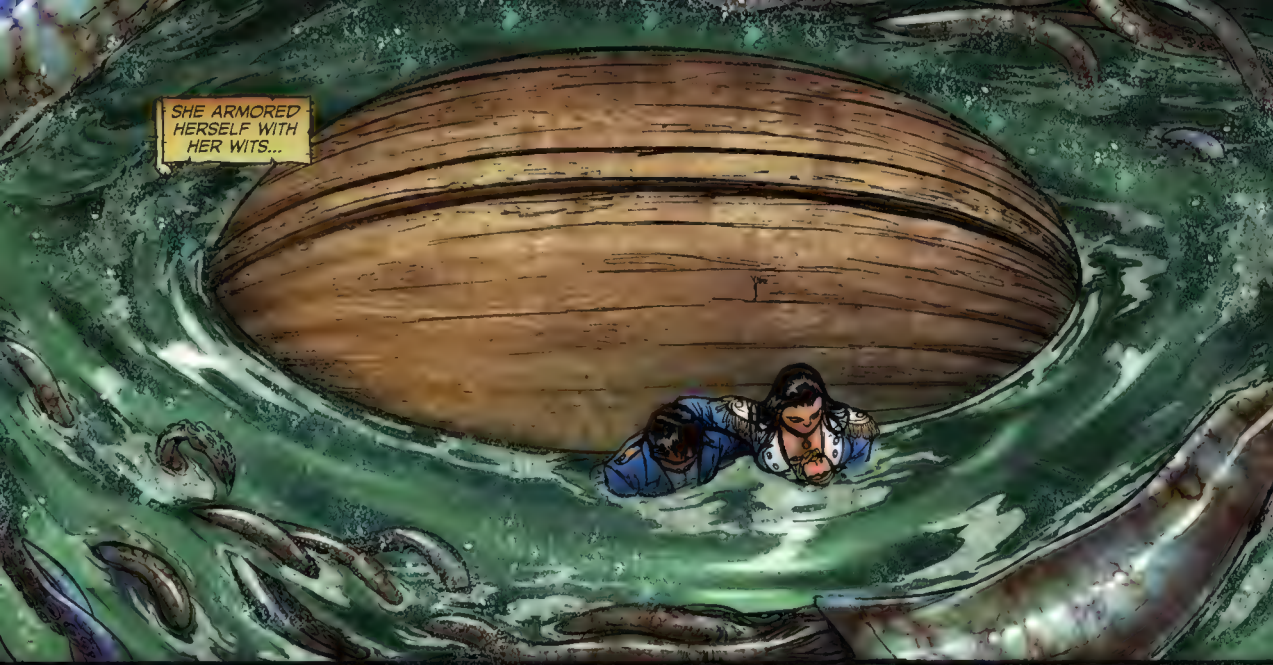
WHEN YOU HAVE LIVED AS LONG
AS I, IT IS EASY TO TANGLE THE
THREADS OF FANTASY AND REALITY.
PAST AND PRESENT.



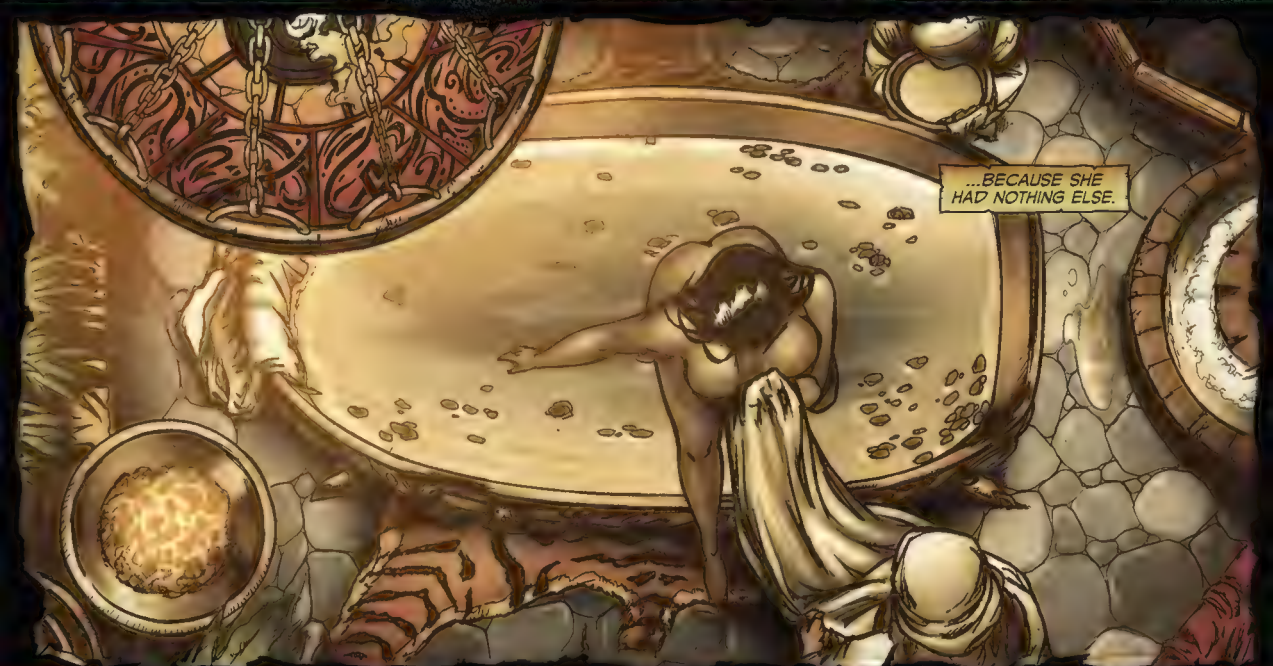
PERHAPS THE
GIRL WAS WEAK.



CERTAINLY, SHE
WAS YOUNG AND
UNTESTED.



SHE ARMORED
HERSELF WITH
HER WITS...



...BECAUSE SHE
HAD NOTHING ELSE.



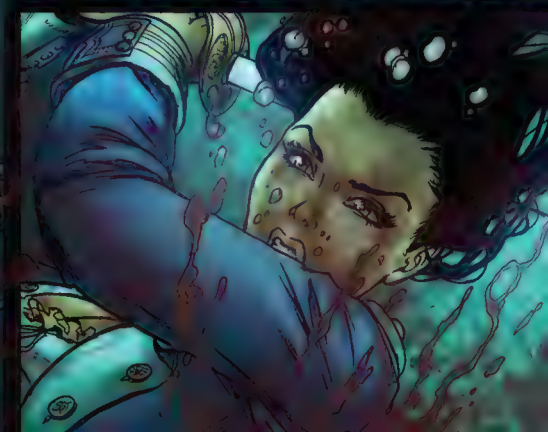
IT FELT LIKE SCANT
PROTECTION, INDEED,
WHEN SHE HAD TO FACE
HER FIRST MONSTER.



BUT THE THREADS OF TIME
WEAVE ONWARD, AND I AM
NO LONGER THAT GIRL.



I HAVE A FEW
MORE WEAPONS AT
MY DISPOSAL, NOW.







WE SURVIVED THAT FIGHT, BUT
MANY OF MY CREWMATES
WERE NOT SO LUCKY.

DON'T LOOK
AT THEM, SON. KEEP
YOUR EYES ON THE
SHORE.



IT'S THE
LIEUTENANT!
SHE SURVIVED!
I THOUGHT FOR
SURE WE'D
LOST HER.

OH, GREAT, THE
CAPTAIN'S BEDWARMER
AND A TWIG OF A BOY.
JUST WHAT OUR JOLLY
BAND NEEDED.



GOOD TO
SEE YOU ALIVE,
LIEUTENANT.
MIDSHIPMAN.
ALL RIGHT?



YES,
SIR.



STRANDED IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY. A PLACE THAT EXISTED TO MOST PEOPLE ONLY IN LEGEND.



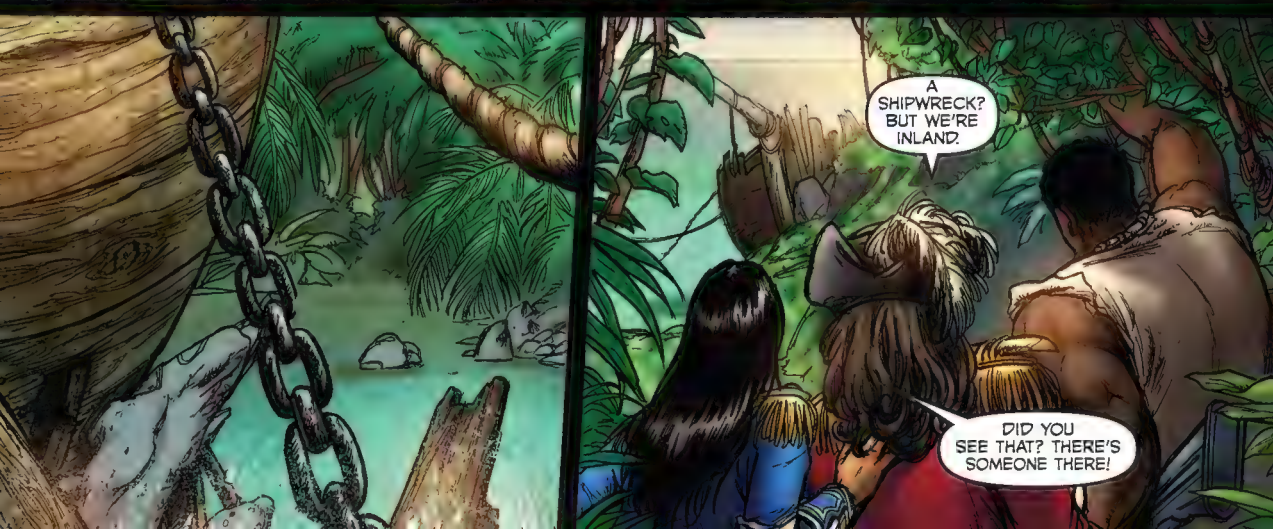


BUT DESPITE THE STRANGENESS OF THIS NEW LAND...



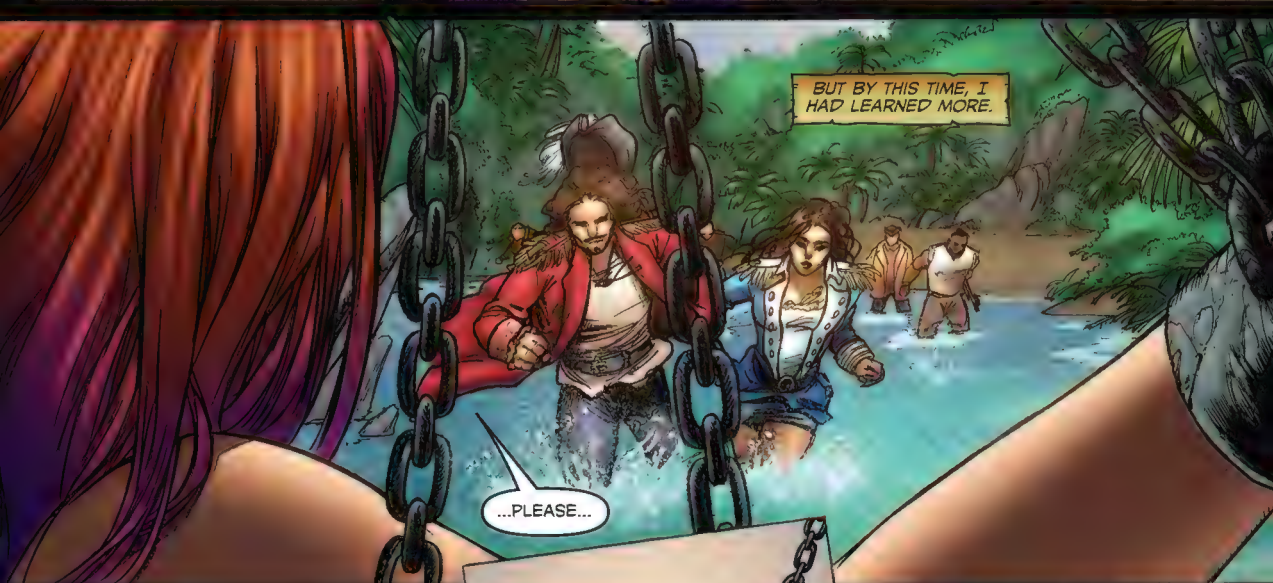
CAPTAIN, LOOK!

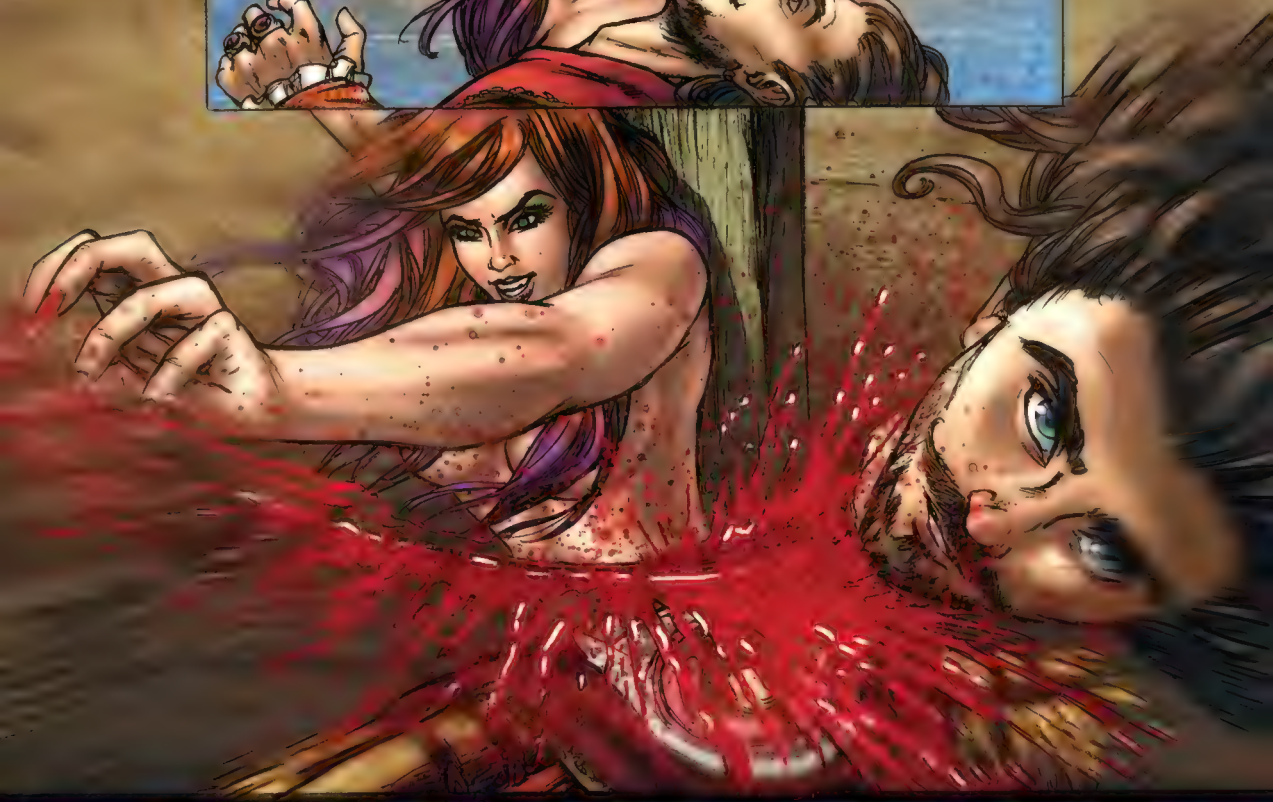
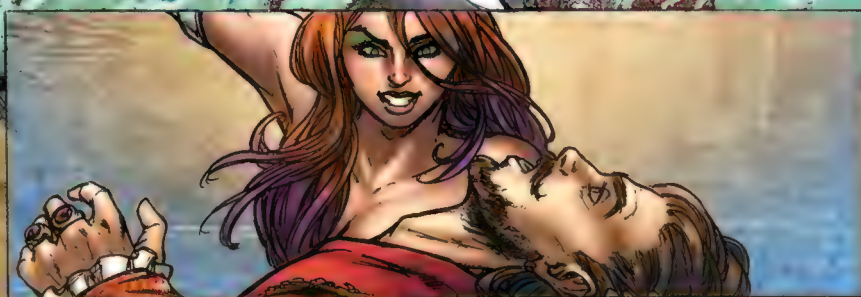
...WE WOULD SOON DISCOVER THAT WE WEREN'T THE FIRST TO BE MAROONED ON THESE FABLED SHORES.

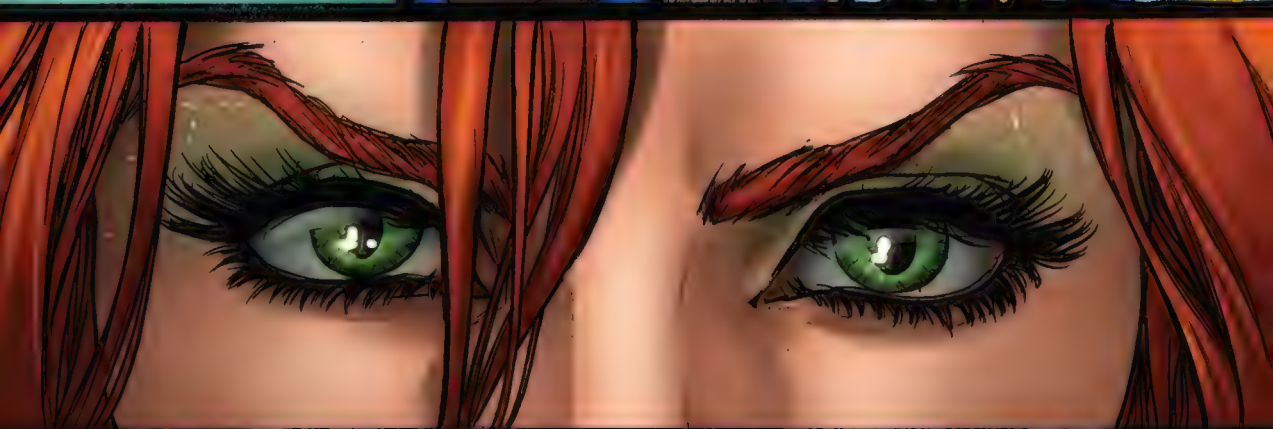
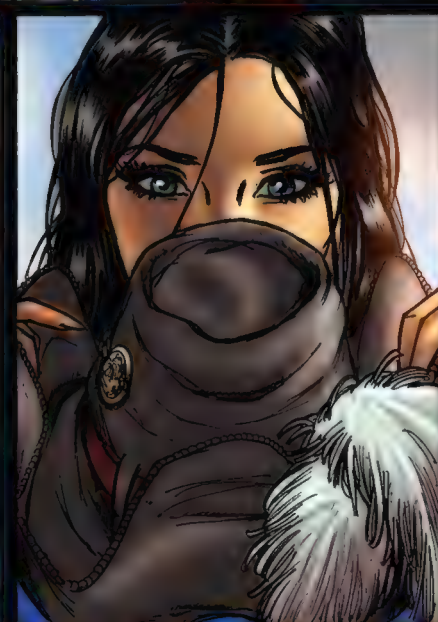


A SHIPWRECK? BUT WE'RE INLAND.

DID YOU SEE THAT? THERE'S SOMEONE THERE!

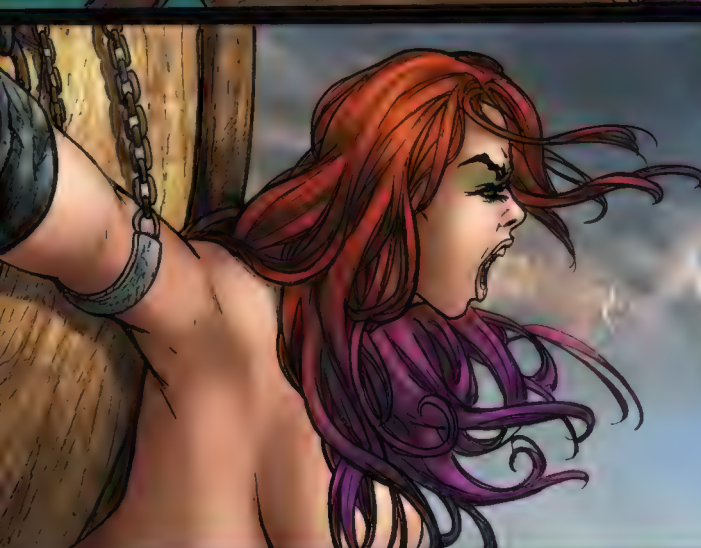








IN THAT MOMENT, I HAD NOTHING
BUT REVENGE IN MY THOUGHTS.
UNTIL A SHADOW DREW THE SIREN'S
EYES UPWARD, AND MINE WITH THEM...



NOOOO...

...AND I HEARD THE
FEAR IN THE SONG
SHE BEGAN.



LITTLE DID WE KNOW THE STORM THAT
THE SIREN'S SONG WROUGHT UPON
OUR ARRIVAL WOULD BE NOTHING
COMPARED TO THE TEMPEST THAT
WAS TO COME.

TO BE CONTINUED...

SHAHRAZAD

A LETTER FROM CO-WRITER, KIM HUTCHISON



From the beginning, *Shahrazad* was intended to be an exercise in creativity. Put two headstrong, literary-minded, imaginative women in a room together with a bottle of wine and a couple of stubborn husbands for support staff, and tell them they can produce an entire world from scratch, including characters and costumes, men and beasts, and the personalities and stories to go with each.

When the insanely elaborate script was finished, it was sent to an artist who had a penchant for detail, liked to draw outside of the lines (and the script) and who, most importantly, had a wicked sense of humor. Next up was the colorist: one of the best in the business, who could create worlds made up entirely of shades and tones. Have her lay down her magic. To top it all off, the letterer was tasked with letting his imagination loose on the page and giving each line of dialogue, each note of a song, each special effect a life of its own.

When it was all said and done, I stepped back, a proud mom amongst the many creative geniuses that had come together to make this comic happen.

"Well, that looks pretty darn good," I said to myself. And then, after a quick congratulatory pat on the back, we put the issue on the shelf and moved along to the next, quite certain we'd given it our best.

But then Big Dog Ink merged with Aspen, and I was told that *Shahrazad* was being re-released. And then I was tasked with looking back over the first issue, of taking the baby off the shelf and seeing if there was anything that we could do better. What I found in this task was the true brilliance of the collaborative nature of the comic book medium. The artist had taken the words Kari and I had written, and had found ways to reinterpret certain scenes in ways I hadn't thought of. The colorist had added her own layer and had brightened a panel here, darkened one there, or had put a shade into a scene that I hadn't imagined could work. The letterer, with all his twisted genius, had crafted captions and balloons that accented the page and special effects that immersed the reader further into the story. And as a writer and creator, it inspired me to want to change certain bits of dialogue, to add narratives and entire lines, to place another layer of creativity on top of what had already been laid down.

The result, I hope, is that you have a story as rich as the tales of *Shahrazad* herself. Something that inspires, intrigues and, yes, even changes, ever so slightly, from what you remembered. This is the true brilliance of the comic book form. It is a collaborative process that takes inspiration from every person who had a hand in turning idea into art. The artists and writers, colorists and letterers, all take inspiration from each other to craft not only stories, but entire worlds that captivate and entertain. As I put this issue to rest one more time, I hope that you, the reader, can see, appreciate, and enjoy with new eyes our story of *Shahrazad* and feel just a touch of the inspiration that we all had in bringing this bit of imagination to life.

SHAHRAZAD

A LETTER FROM CO-WRITER, KARI CASTOR



I've been writing since I was a kid and publishing for several years now, but *Shahrazad* is the first comic I've worked on, and I'm both honored and proud to be a part of it. When Kim and Tom pitched the idea to me and asked if I'd be interested in working on it, I was intrigued but skeptical. I've always thought of myself as primarily a prose fiction writer, and while I know some pretty incredible writers have worked in both fiction and comics, I certainly wasn't (and still am not) prepared to start comparing myself to Neil Gaiman or Harlan Ellison.

This book has been an incredible challenge and frequently pushed me outside my writerly comfort zone. This, I think, is part of what makes me love it so much — as Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty...” I suspect he may not have been thinking about the writing of comic books when he said that, but it seems to apply nonetheless. *Shahrazad* tests my limits. It forces me to find creative solutions to overcome problems I wouldn't have encountered

otherwise. It also forces me to be a better communicator, to identify the things that really matter and the things that don't in order to retain not only a working relationship, but also a friendship with my co-writer Kim. Just as *Shahrazad* pushes me, Kim and I push each other to find our best work. It can be frustrating, and we certainly annoy the hell out of each other sometimes, but it's also incredibly rewarding when we solve a sticky plot point or pacing issue in exactly the right way. *Shahrazad* wouldn't be what it is without both of us and the different strengths and perspectives we each bring to the table.

Since our titular character has a literary history, we wanted to find ways to make use of that. *The Thousand and One Nights* is an incredibly interesting text. I could talk at fairly considerable length about the original, how it shows the influence of oral storytelling, how it contains early examples of many of the literary techniques and styles we are so familiar with today, and how our crazy, genre mashy *Shahrazad* is, in many ways, a perfectly reasonable extension of these ancient folk tales. The narrative structure itself was a major influence in our storytelling. In *The Nights*, there is the frame story of *Shahrazad* herself, newest wife to King *Shahryar*, telling tales to keep her fickle husband entertained and thus save her own life. Then there are the stories *Shahrazad* tells, embedded within this frame story, but also often embedded within themselves, layers deep. In addition, there are themes, motifs, and archetypes that appear over and over again throughout the course of the stories. For me, an admitted and unashamed lit-geek, finding ways in our own series to parallel and pay homage to the original stories is a true joy. Our repetition of visual and narrative motifs, our stories within the story, our direct address of the reader — all these and more are directly inspired by *The Thousand and One Nights*. In addition, a careful reader may notice that we often include little allusions to other stories and historical events. You don't need to catch them to enjoy the story, but in the spirit of the original *Nights*, we aim to make *Shahrazad* a layered experience. I hope you enjoy reading it, and I can't wait to show you what's coming next!



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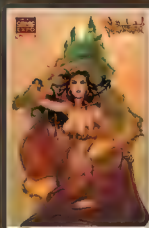
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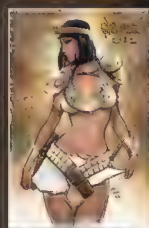
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SO MANY YEARS, SO
MANY STORIES...A
LIFETIME'S WORTH.

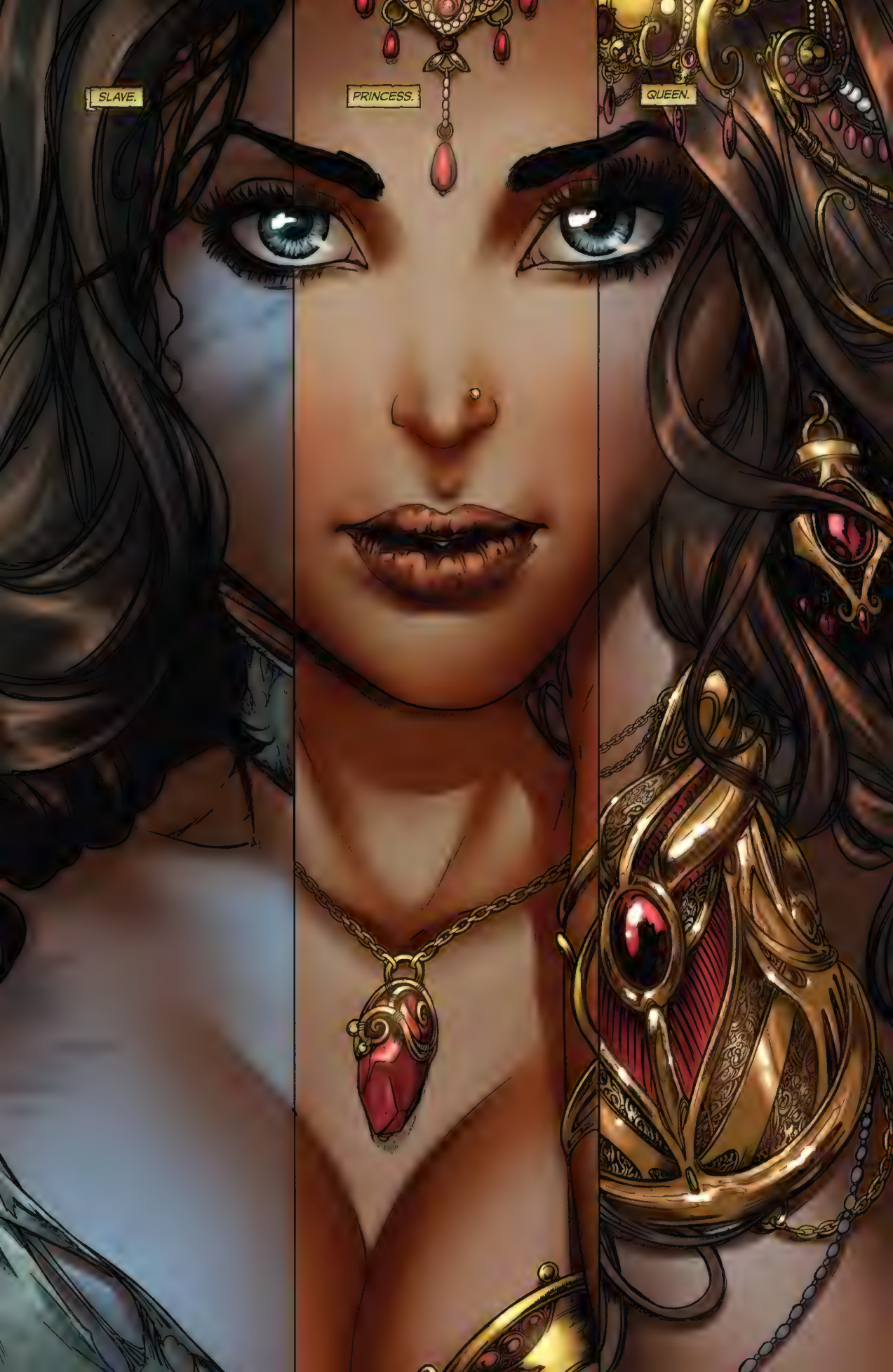


MANY
LIFETIMES.



I ONCE TOLD STORIES
TO SAVE MY OWN LIFE,
AND OTHERS'.

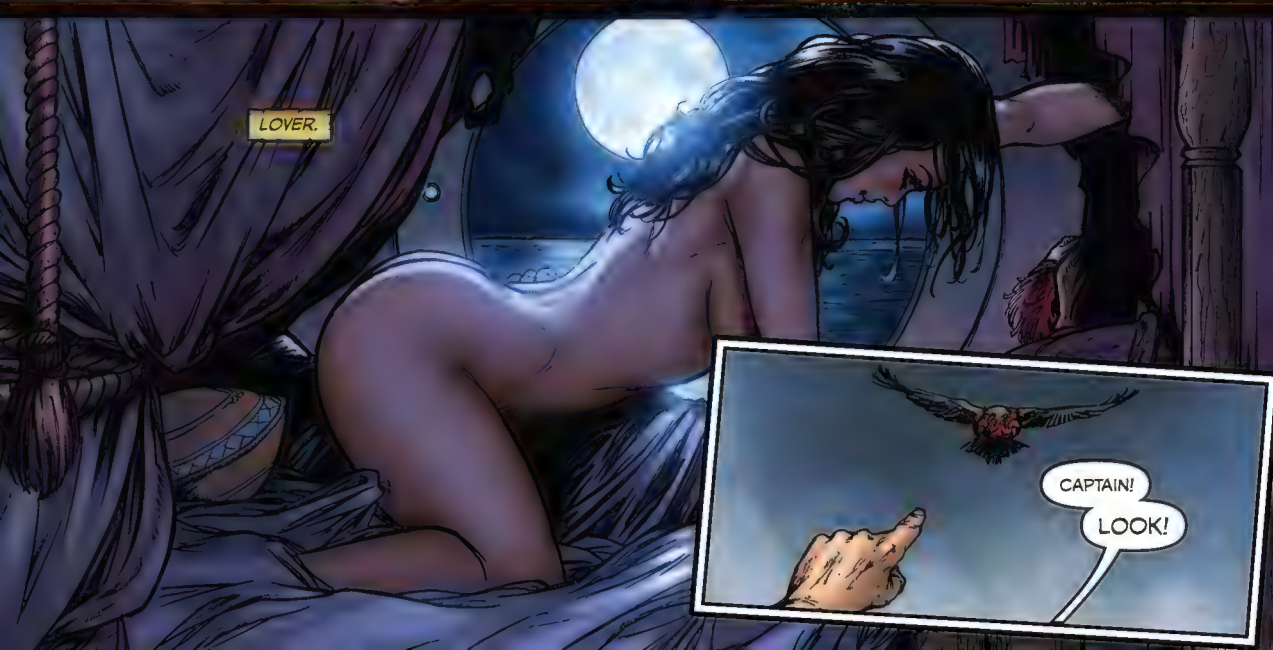
BUT THOSE WERE ONLY
THE FIRST OF MY TALES...



SLAVE.

PRINCESS.

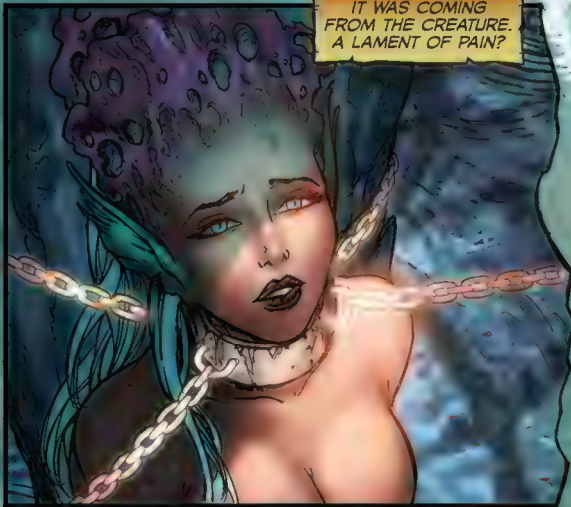
QUEEN.





THAT NOISE AGAIN. THE ONE
THAT DROVE THE SAILORS MAD.

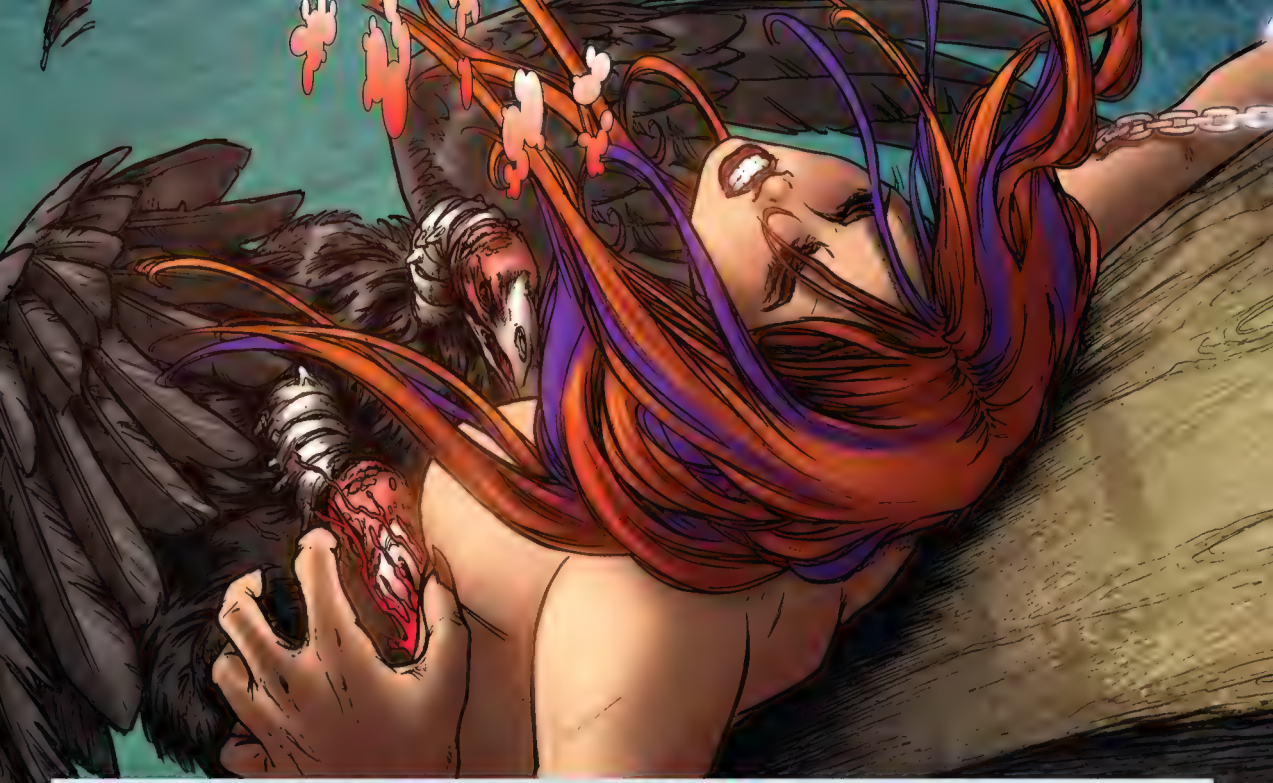
SUCH A STRANGE,
SAD SONG.



IT WAS COMING
FROM THE CREATURE.
A LAMENT OF PAIN?

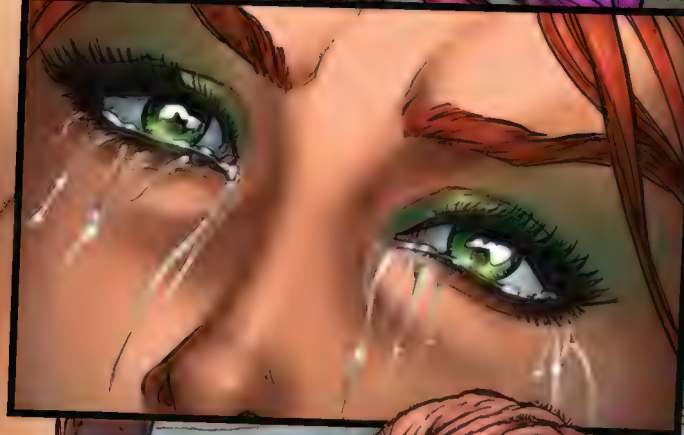


OR A CRY FOR HELP?
A SOLITARY NOTE IN
SEARCH OF HER
SISTERS' HARMONIES?



AND OTHER, STRANGER
THINGS, TOO, THOUGH WE
DIDN'T KNOW IT YET.





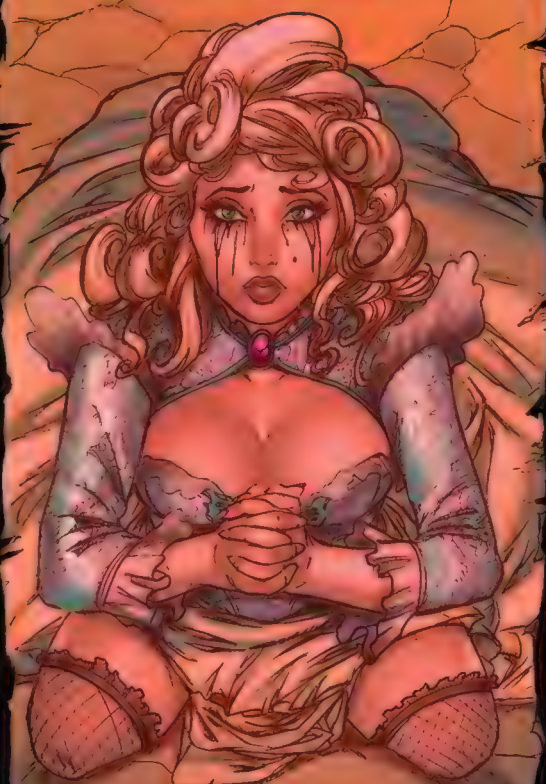
WE
HAVE TO STOP
THIS.

BUT SHE
KILLED THE CAPTAIN...
CAPTAIN.



ONCE THERE WAS A
TIME WHEN I CHOSE
NOT TO ACT...

...AND ANOTHER PAID THE
PRICE FOR MY INDIFFERENCE.



SCH-
THUNK

I TRY NOT TO
MAKE THE SAME
MISTAKE TWICE.

MR. SARMAAN,
THE HARPOON.

LET'S END
HER SUFFERING.

WHSSSH







WHO CONTROLLED THE SIRENS?
THAT QUESTION IS ONE I DEARLY WISH
WE HAD KNOWN THE ANSWER TO.



THINGS WERE COMING, DEAR
READER. LOATHSOME THINGS.
WONDROUS THINGS.

THEY WOULD BRING MARVELS
FROM REALMS BEYOND YOUR
IMAGINATION.



THEY WOULD ALSO
BRING DEATH.

BUT I'M GETTING
AHEAD OF MYSELF.



THAT, AS THEY SAY, IS THE
BEAUTY OF HINDSIGHT.

A TALENT
PERFECTED
BY THE GOD
KNOWN AS
JANUS...



WE NEED TO GET
OFF THIS ISLAND. HOW MANY
BIRDS DO WE HAVE?



WE'VE
ROUNDED
UP ALL THE
SURVIVORS,
CAPTAIN.

WHAT
FEW THERE
ARE.

WHEREVER
WE'RE GOING, THEY
SHOULD BE
ENOUGH TO GET US
ALL THERE.

GOOD. THANK YOU,
MR. SARMAAN.
LET'S
RIDE.



WHERE TO, CAPTAIN?
WE'RE HUNDREDS OF MILES
FROM ANYWHERE.

YOU HEARD
THE SIREN -
SOMEONE'S OUT
THERE PULLING
THE STRINGS.



THAT **SOMEONE**
IS OUR BEST CHANCE
OUT OF HERE.

BUT HOW
DO WE FIND
HIM?



FOLLOW THE
TWO-HEADED
BEAST. IT HAS
TO ROOST
SOMEWHERE.

AYE AYE,
CAPTAIN!



THERE ARE FEW PLACES I
HAVE EVER FELT COMPLETELY
AT HOME.

THE SEA
CAME CLOSE.

BUT IT COULD NEVER
COMPETE WITH THE SKY.



THIS SKY, THOUGH,
HELD UNFORESEEN
DANGERS.

WHEN WE LOST OUR SHIP, THE
CYCLOPS, I WAS TOO BUSY
FIGHTING SEA MONSTERS TO
PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THE
PLIGHT OF OUR FLIERS.

STEADY NOW,
BEASTIE.

GOD'S BLOOD,
I HATE FLYING.



IT WASN'T UNTIL THE STORM
TOOK SHAPE IN THE AIR
AROUND ME THAT I
REALIZED WHY SO FEW MADE
IT TO LANDFALL.





THE SEA, I FOUND, WAS
NOT THE ONLY PLACE
WITH MONSTERS IN IT.

ZRAKKT

ZAKT

BLOW
'EM DOWN,
BOYS!

HA, YER FILTHY
BLIGHTERS!

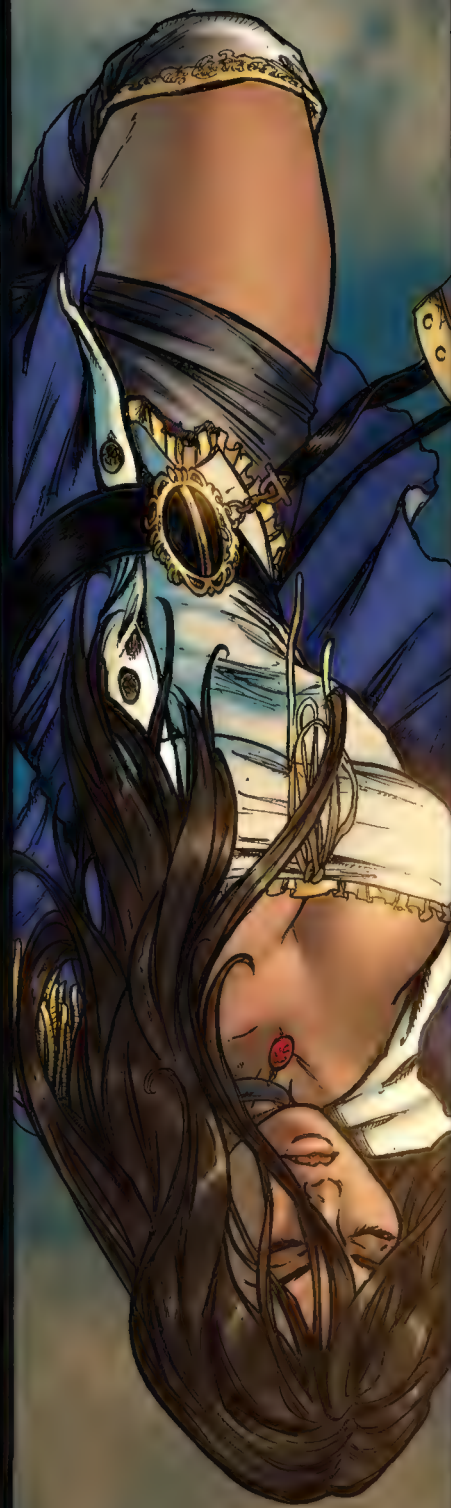
I WAS USED TO FLYING
AMONG THE CLOUDS...

...NOT FIGHTING
THEM.





FEAR. THE KIND THAT
COMES AS DARKNESS
APPROACHES.



PEACE. AN ACCEPTANCE
OF THE INEVITABLE.







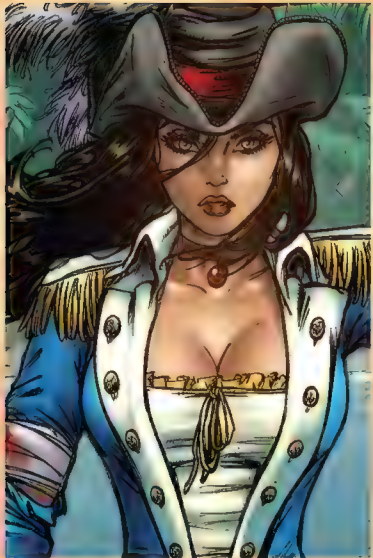
THEN
NOTHING.

TO BE CONTINUED...

SHAHRAZAD

“The Unfortunate Effect of Sarcasm, or: Be Careful What You Wish For”

BY KIM HUTCHISON



Making art is hard. Writing, drawing, penciling, painting, lettering, coloring: it's all art. Especially in the comic book format, where the process is so deeply collaborative. Throughout plotting and development *Shahrazad* and her world of characters and experiences, Kari and I often butted heads with each other and other team members who all had opinions of their own. “Shouldn't the Sirens be sexier?” “*Shahrazad*'s costume is kinda meh.” “Oh, what about flesh-eating butterflies as the main villains?” (I will refrain from mentioning which of the brilliant minds suggested the last.)

As with most projects, *Shahrazad* began with a certain style, look, and back story, and morphed from there. Some of the commentary from the editorial staff after wrapping the original issue #1 focused on how there wasn't enough fantasy, wasn't enough beauty and sexiness to *Shahrazad*'s character. Kari and I highly disagreed, and eventually won the argument, but not before an unfortunate moment of frustration made it to print...

Here's how the story goes: During one late night writing session, several glasses of wine in, Kari and I began complaining to each other about the portrayal of women in comics, especially the overt use of boobs and butts when the story or scene didn't call for anything of the sort. The conversation led to an instruction actually being typed into the script, that this particular scene could indeed be used for a gratuitous butt shot. Make it as in your face as you want, we wrote, put it right up in there so the editors will be all kinds of happy that we're not skipping out on the sexiness. Somehow that bit of too-real sarcasm was overlooked by editorial the first time through the script, was overlooked by everyone during pre-flight, but was not overlooked by one cheeky British interior artist Mike Krome, who took that instruction at face value. Fast forward several months and I'm holding a copy of issue #2 in my hands, while my co-writer and several other people are looking on, and I'm wondering how the heck no one caught that very overt, entirely gratuitous and completely unnecessary full on butt cheek panel...

Needless to say, I've learned my lesson about using the delete button after a bout of frustration-induced sarcasm...but maybe not the use of sarcasm itself!!



SHAHRAZAD

“Going Bat Crazy”

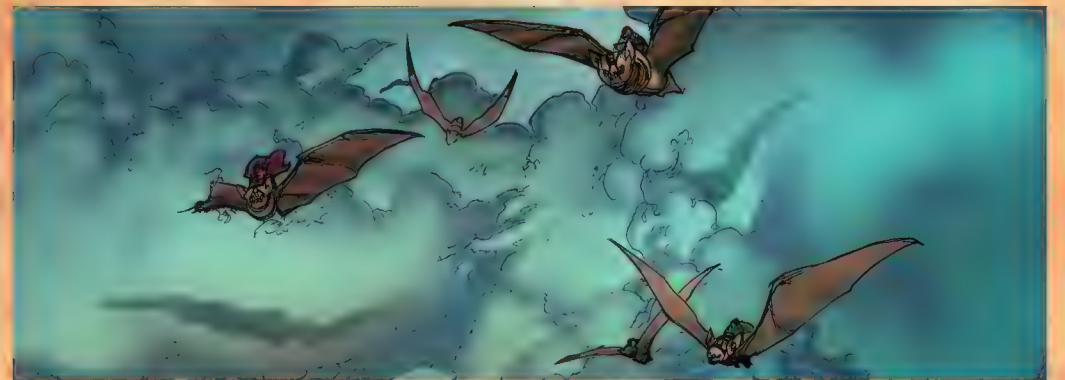
BY KARI CASTOR



I think the bat riders may be one of my favorite elements from this first story arc of *Shahrazad*. Anyone who knows me knows that I love pirates, and so of course our nautical rogues gallery has a special place in my heart... but just look at those bats! Look at how adorable they are! Not that I can take much credit for that – the bats themselves were my idea (inspired by a favorite childhood movie), but Mike's lines and Nei's colors really bring them to life. Kim and I were incredibly lucky to be able to work with such an amazing art team for this book, and you, dear reader, are likewise incredibly lucky that you don't have to suffer through 22 pages of shoddy stick figures, which is what you'd have gotten if I was in charge of drawing this thing.

Look at *Shahrazad* when she gets all saddled up. Go ahead, flip to that page. I'll wait. Doesn't she just look like she belongs there, riding atop that glorious bat? It felt right to me that *Shahrazad* would be an aviator at heart. Who among us, trapped on the dusty ground, hasn't dreamt of flying away into the boundless sky? We've shown you glimpses of our titular character's past in these two issues, and it hasn't always been a pleasant one. For a woman who has spent a great deal of time trapped by her circumstances, gilded though the cage may have been, the desire to escape would have been nearly overwhelming at times. And so to have the whole world laid out below you and know that you can go anywhere, do anything, with no one to claim mastery over you – well, that's unmistakable freedom. And I think that freedom is one of the things *Shahrazad* craves more than anything else. So the sky feels like home to her, and though her time there in this issue is unexpectedly cut short, I promise these pages won't be the last time we'll get to see those ace flying skills in action. Who knows, maybe there's even a magic carpet somewhere in her past. Or her future...

Or maybe I'll just find a way to work some more bats in. Because damn, I really love those bats.





Vol. 1 | Cov. A

#3
OF 5

KIM HUTCHISON
KARI CASTOR
MIKE KROME
NEI RUFFINO

Shahrazad





VOL. 1 | Cov. B

#3
OF 5

Shahrazad

KIM HUTCHISON
KARI CASTOR
MIKE KROME
NEI RUFFINO



Shahrazad

VOLUME ONE

STORY BY:
TOM HUTCHISON, KIM HUTCHISON, KARI CASTOR,
WITH AARON CASTOR AND BRETT CATE

WRITTEN BY:
KIM HUTCHISON AND KARI CASTOR

PENCILS BY:
MIKE KROME

COLORS BY:
NEI RUFFINO

LETTERING BY:
HDE

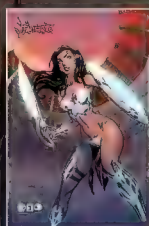
A BIG DOG INK PRODUCTION
SHAHRAZAD CREATED BY
TOM HUTCHISON AND BRETT CATE,
WITH CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM J. SCOTT CAMPBELL



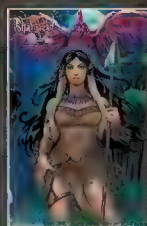
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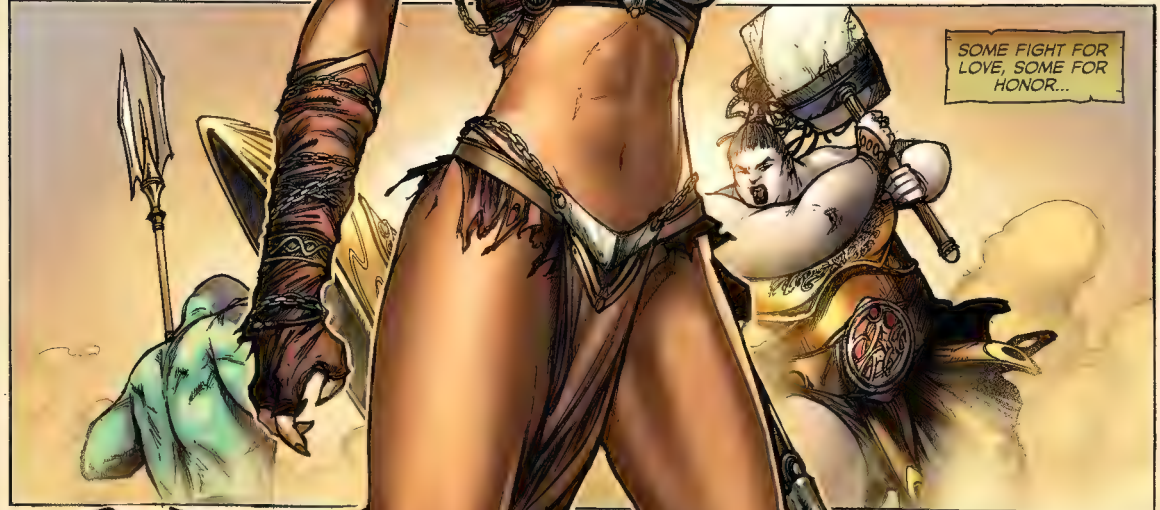
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THE UNIVERSE IS
FULL OF STORIES.

TALES OF WARRIORS
AND COMBAT AND
GRAND ADVENTURES.



SOME FIGHT FOR
LOVE, SOME FOR
HONOR...



OTHERS FIGHT
FOR THE GLORY
OF A BATTLE
WELL WON.



BUT THERE COMES A TIME, DEAR READER, WHEN THE FIGHTS NO LONGER THRILL...

NO WEAPONS? YOU'LL MAKE AN EASY VICTORY!

ARROGANCE MAKES FOOLS OF GOOD WARRIORS.



...WHEN YOU BECOME JADED AND BORED WITH EVEN THE MOST NOBLE OF VICTORIES, IT'S A DANGEROUS THING, THIS INDIFFERENCE.

AAH! STAND AND FIGHT, LITTLE FLAME BRAWLER!

HA! ARE YOU SURE THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT?

SO MANY FIGHTS, SO MANY FIGHTERS.

ALL OF THEM BROUGHT HERE AT MY BECK AND CALL.

ALL OF THEM SO DULL. ONE WINNER, ONE LOSER. SO PREDICTABLE, EVEN WITHOUT MY GIFT OF SIGHT.



IT'S A CANCER THAT EATS AT THE SOUL OF EVEN THE MOST ANCIENT BEINGS.

ANOTHER WARRIOR FALLS

NOW YOU DIE!

YOUR OWN FURY STOKES THE FLAMES OF MY FIRE! NOW **BURN!**



BUT EVEN
A CORPSE
HAS A FUTURE,
MY GIRL. WHY IS
YOURS HIDDEN
FROM ME?

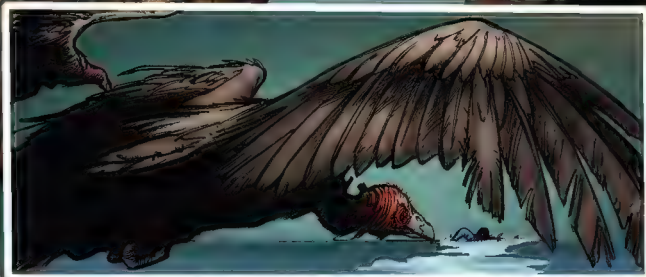


BAH
DEAD.

AND
DULL, LIKE
THE REST.



WHAT'S
THIS?
WELL,
NOW...







THE BIRDS ARE EXHAUSTED, SIR - WE HAVE TO SET DOWN HERE, OR WE RISK LOSING MORE OF THEM.

AYE, PUT 'EM DOWN ON THE BEACH, BOYS!

MAYBE THAT'LL AT LEAST BE FREE OF MONSTERS. CAN'T STAND MANY MORE LOSSES.



WE CAN'T STOP HERE! WE HAVE TO GO AFTER THE CAPTAIN!

AND WE WILL, LAD, BUT WE CAN'T RISK THE BIRDS BY KEEPIN' 'EM UP ANY LONGER.

LET ME GUESS. BACK INTO THE JUNGLE?

BACK INTO THE JUNGLE MR. JENNINGS. FORWARD, ME HEARTIES!

HOW MANY SOULS HAD BEEN CLAIMED BY THAT WRETCHED ISLAND WITH ITS CRUEL MASTER, I'LL NEVER KNOW.



BUT I AM CERTAIN THE BLOOD OF THE GLADIATORS WAS NOT THE FIRST TO BE NEEDLESSLY SPILLED ON THOSE SANDS.

OW!



WATCH WHAT YER DOIN', LAD.

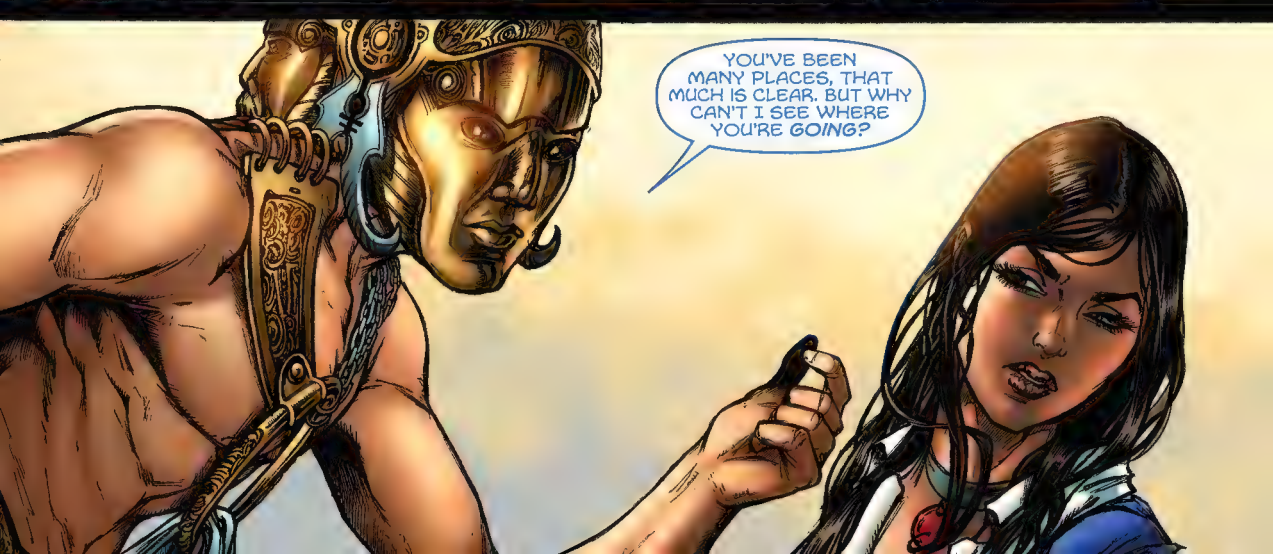
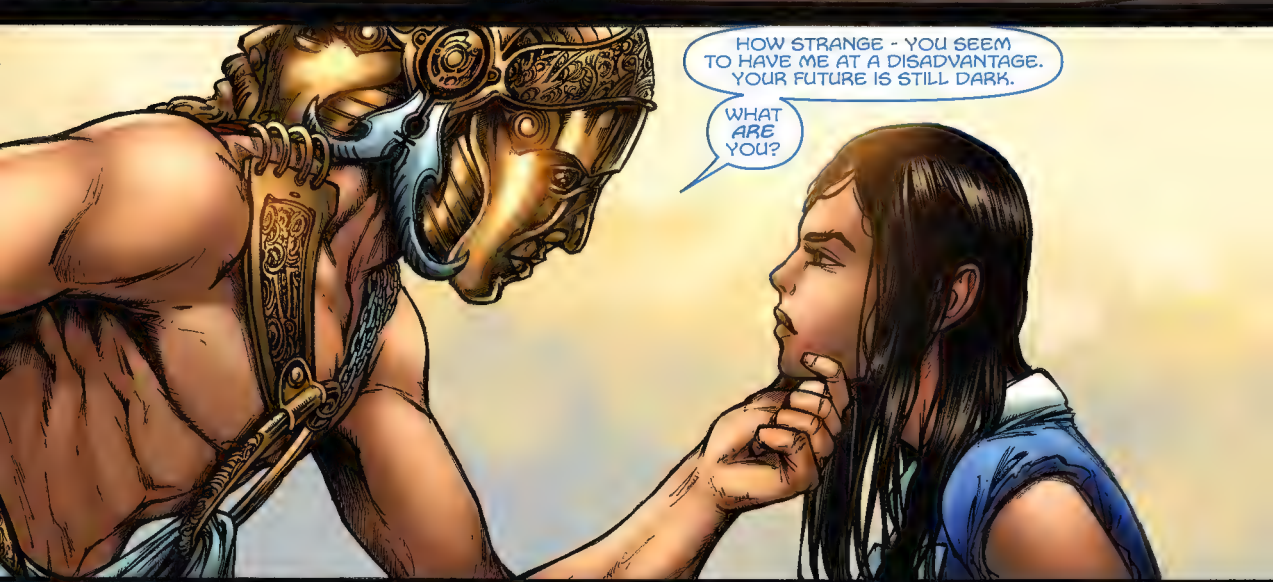
SORRY, MR. JENNINGS.



I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...

NOR WOULD IT BE THE LAST...







WHERE I'M GOING?

YOUR FUTURE, SHAHRAZAD. I CAN'T SEE IT.

UNLIKE YOUR PAST... SUCH AS WHEN YOU SPENT THE LAST OF YOUR BULLETS AGAINST MY SEA CREATURES.

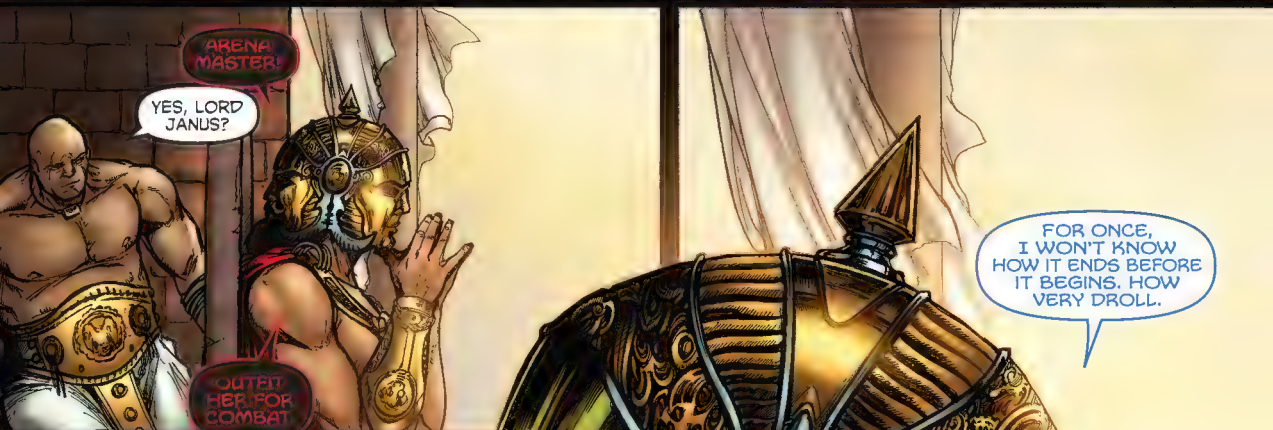
HOW DO YOU KNOW--



I SEE A SLAVE, A QUEEN, A CAPTAIN... BUT YOUR FUTURE ELUDES ME. SHALL I CHOOSE FOR YOU, THEN?

I'D REALLY RATHER YOU DIDN'T.

OH, BUT I INSIST.



ARENA MASTER!

YES, LORD JANUS?

OUTFIT HER FOR COMBAT

FOR ONCE, I WON'T KNOW HOW IT ENDS BEFORE IT BEGINS. HOW VERY DROLL.



YES, MY LORD.

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME AND I'LL GO PEACEABLY.





I'D FOUGHT FOR MY LIFE BEFORE, MANY TIMES, BUT NEVER IN FRONT OF A BLOODTHIRSTY AUDIENCE.

A WOMAN LIKE YOU WANTS AN ELEGANT WEAPON.

A WOMAN LIKE ME?



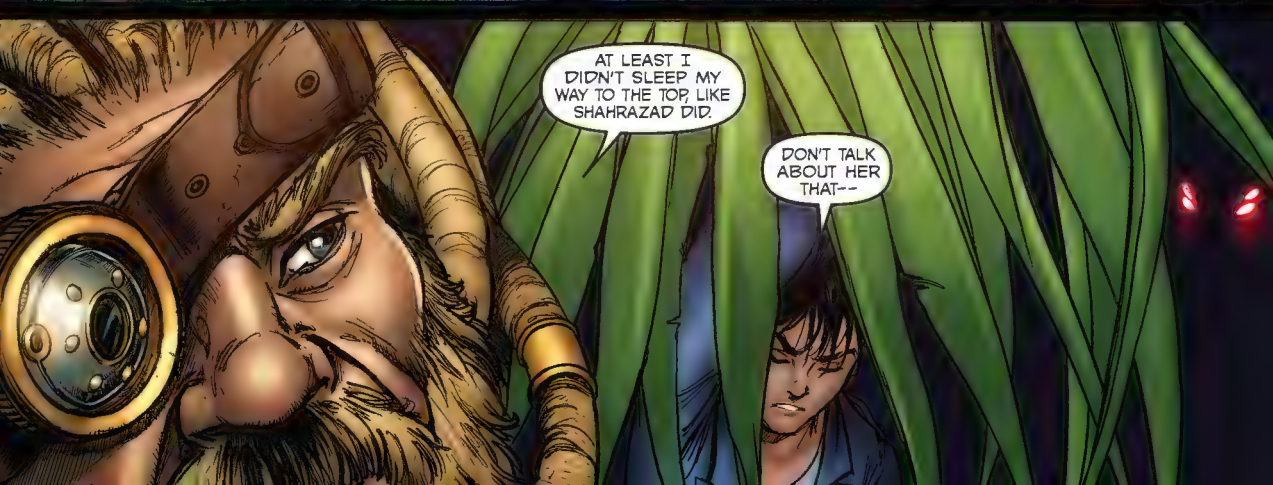
KEEP IT SIMPLE, GO FOR THE SOFT PARTS...

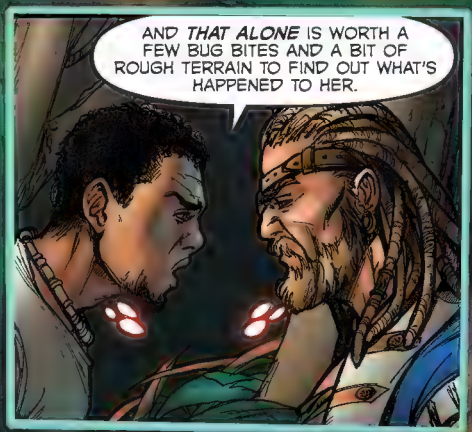
IF HE COMES AT YOU.

IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS...



...IT'S THAT THE WEAPON SHOULD FIT THE BATTLE.









GAAAHH!

UNNGH!

SKKROTCHH

KRNGSHT

DEATH...



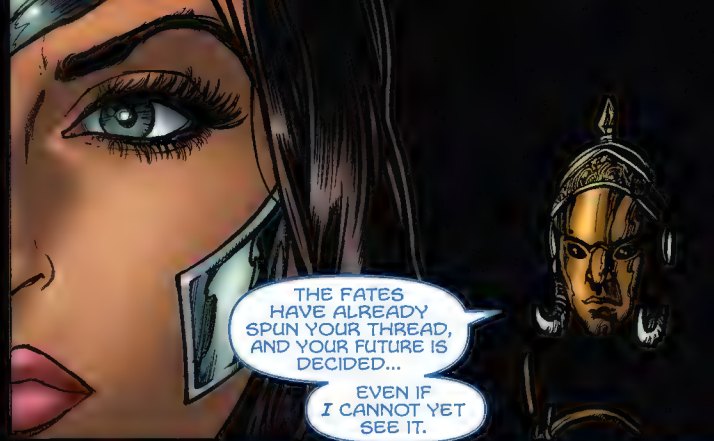
...THE ULTIMATE END FOR ALL MORTAL BEINGS.



YOUR WEAPON IS A CHOICE OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE.

RAAAHH!

KREEII-YEE!
YEAH!



THE FATES HAVE ALREADY SPUN YOUR THREAD, AND YOUR FUTURE IS DECIDED...
EVEN IF I CANNOT YET SEE IT.



JANUS, IS IT? WHO EXACTLY ARE YOU? AND WHY THE HELL HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?



I AM JANUS. BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS, ENTRANCES AND EXITS ARE MY DOMAIN.

ALL YOU REALLY NEED KNOW, THOUGH, IS THAT THIS IS MY ARENA, AND YOU ARE HERE TO FIGHT.

SUCH AN EXQUISITE OFFERING YOU WILL MAKE.

OTHER MEN HAVE TRIED TO BEND ME TO THEIR WILL. YOU EXPECT TO FARE BETTER THAN THEY DID?



YAAAAH!

KRREEEEE!

HA!

BUH-KOOM

BRAAT-ATT-ATT



HE'S GONE.

BE A MIRACLE IF ANY OF US SURVIVE THIS IDIOTIC MISSION.

THE CAPTAIN IS ON TOP OF THAT MOUNTAIN. LET'S MOVE.



FAIR WARNING,
OH LORD JANUS. I HAVE
OUTWITTED OVERBEARING
SLAVE MASTERS WITH GOD
COMPLEXES BEFORE.



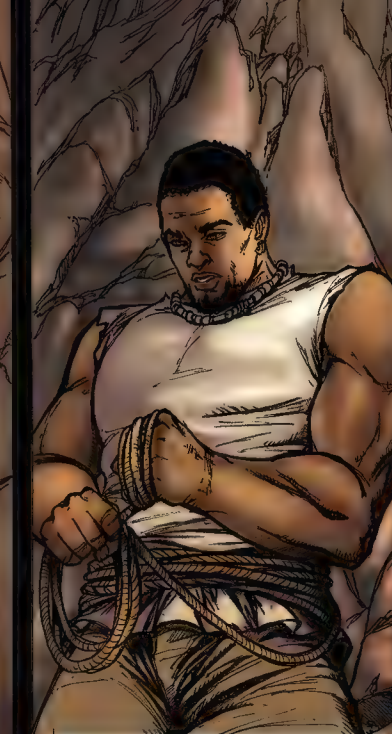
I HAVE SEEN
THE TRUTH OF THAT.
AND THUS WE COME
TO THE *REAL* REASON
I HAVE BROUGHT
YOU HERE.

IT SO HAPPENS
THAT KNOWLEDGE
IS MY SPECIALTY. I
SEE ALL.



I SUPPOSE
YOU HAVE A
BRILLIANT PLAN FOR
HOW WE'RE GOING
TO GET UP THERE,
SARMAAN?

I DON'T RIGHTLY
KNOW ABOUT BRILLIANT,
MR. JENNINGS, BUT IT LOOKS
LIKE WE'LL BE DOING
SOME CLIMBING.



DO YE
REMEMBER
YER KNOTS,
BOY?

AYE,
SIR.

GOOD
LAD.



"I WATCHED YOU FOR SOME TIME
BEFORE HAVING MY PETS BRING YOU
TO ME. I SAW YOUR PRESENT WHILE
WITNESSING YOUR HISTORY.

"YOUR TALE STRETCHES BACK MUCH
FURTHER THAN IT SHOULD. YOUR STORIES
ARE VAST, YOUR THREAD TOO LONG. I
STILL HAVE YET TO REACH THE
BEGINNING OF IT ALL.

"WHY IS THAT,
I WONDER?"



CHANKY



STEADY,
BOYS. SLOW AND
STEADY!



AND THEN THERE'S THE MATTER OF YOUR FUTURE, DEAR CAPTAIN SHAHRAZAD. WHY CAN'T I SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU?

IT MUST IRK YOU NOT TO KNOW, YOU WHO CLAIM TO SEE ALL. ARE YOU WORRIED THAT I'LL BE THE END OF YOUR RULE HERE?

DO YOU BEGIN TO DOUBT YOUR OWN POWERS? HAVE I, A MERE HUMAN, SOMEHOW PUT A WRINKLE IN YOUR GODLIKE PLANS?

DON'T MISTAKE CURIOSITY FOR DOUBT

I STILL KNOW THE OUTCOME. THE ONLY QUESTION IS HOW!

YOU'RE THE FIRST SOURCE OF REAL EXCITEMENT I'VE HAD IN YEARS

BUT THE RESULT IS INEVITABLE...

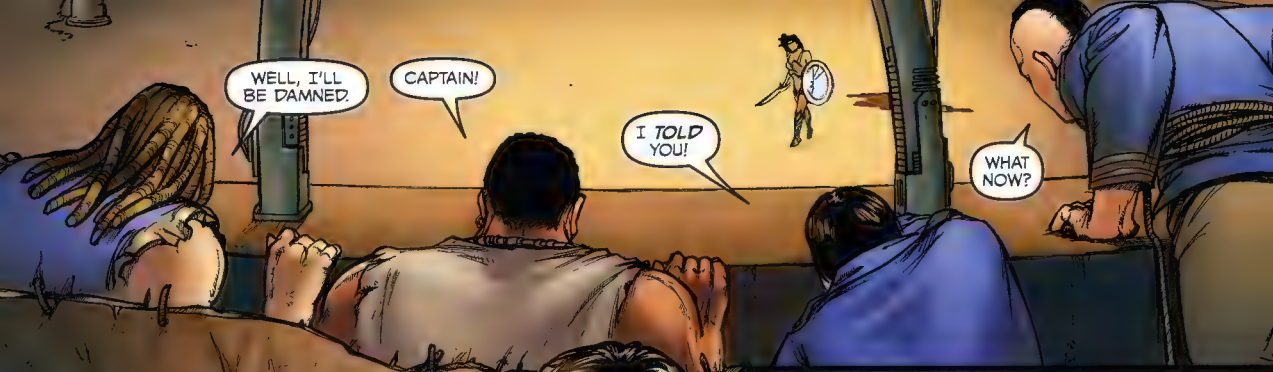
LOOK, WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

SSKKT

AAAAH
EEEE
EE!

EASY, LAD. JUST THINK ABOUT ALL THOSE TIMES YE CLIMBED UP TO THE CROW'S NEST.

YES, SIR.



WELL, I'LL
BE DAMNED.

CAPTAIN!

I TOLD
YOU!

WHAT
NOW?



**FIGHT!
FIGHT!**

YEAH!

YEAH!

**FOR
JANUS!**

**FOR
GLORY!**

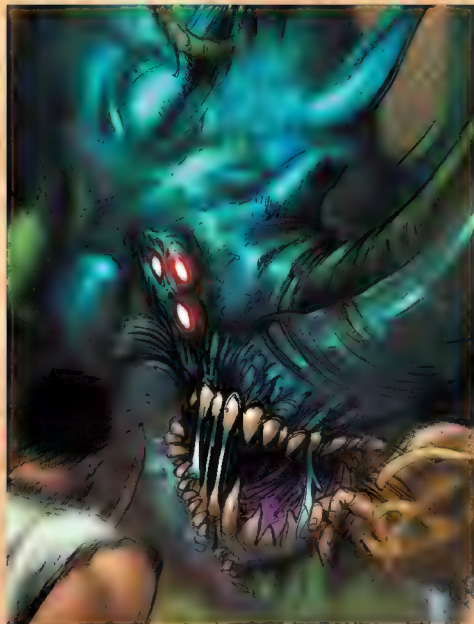
LIKE
ALL MORTAL
CREATURES,
SHAHRAZAD,
YOU TOO
**MUST
DIE!**

TO BE CONTINUED...

SHAHRAZAD

“I Bestow This Power Upon Thee”

BY KARI CASTOR



I wonder sometimes if our letterer hates us. Maybe our artists, too. Possibly everyone aside from us who winds up having to read the script and wonder what on earth was wrong with us while we wrote it (85% of the time the answer to that is wine. The other 15% is just because we're weirdos.).

You see, I was going back through issue #3 as I worked on revisions for the re-release, and I noticed that Kim and I have a tendency to leave strange notes embedded in the script for our remote collaborators. Kim already noted how one of her snarky notes in the #2 script led to an interesting panel appearing in that issue. But it's not just snark that we throw in, and unlike the infamous issue #2 butt shot, most of our notes *are* intended to be taken seriously by the people they're written to.

Here, then, for your entertainment, I present, with new commentary from myself in [brackets], a sampling of the instructions we included in the Shahrazad #3 script.

Directions for Mike Krome, phenomenal artist:

Big, giant, humongous, horned insect thing leaps from the brush. He has those glowing eyes we've seen in the other panels. And he's ravenous. He's bloodthirsty, he wants to eat ALL THE PIRATES. [Don't mess with hangry giant insect things.] Like rhinoceros sized.

Two panels that paralleled each other. Do something cool design-wise with them or keep them simple, do what seems cool to you. [In other words, basically, do whatever you want. Because we just offered you two entirely opposite choices.]

Other pirates are licking their wounds (figuratively, of course -- they should probably not be literally licking anything). [Just to be clear, since we accidentally got that butt shot in #2, and I don't want any more mistakes of that sort.]

Directions for HDE, letterer extraordinaire

Assortment of pirate chatter here to portray the chaos of the moment. Work it in where it fits, and you can make changes/additions if appropriate. I BESTOW THIS POWER UPON THEE. [Do you feel like you've been knighted? Because I think we just knighted you.]

Splekt <or something like that, I'm not sure what kind of sound an impalement should make, and that was the best I could come up with> [This is actually a new note, one that I added for the revised edition. I can't tell you how often my sound effect notes include words to the effect of "or something, I don't know, can you make it sound cool?"]

I know I've said this before, but I'm incredibly grateful to have had such wonderful collaborators on this project, who were willing to take the myriad bits of insanity that Kim and I gave and turn them into such a beautiful comic book.

I guess what I'm saying is, Mike and HDE, I think I owe you guys a beer or twenty.



VOL. 1 | Cov A

#4
OF 5

KIM HUTCHISON
KARI CASTOR
MIKE KROME
NEI RUFFINO

Shahrazad





Vol. 1 | Cov B

#4
OF 5

Shahrazad

Kim HUTCHISON
Kari CASTOR
Mike KROME
Neil RUFFINO



Shahrazad

VOLUME ONE

STORY BY:
TOM HUTCHISON, KIM HUTCHISON, KARI CASTOR,
WITH AARON CASTOR AND BRETT CATE

WRITTEN BY:
KIM HUTCHISON AND KARI CASTOR

PENCILS BY:
MIKE KROME

COLORS BY:
NEI RUFFINO

LETTERING BY:
HDE

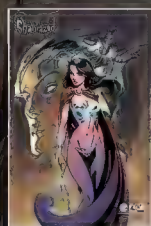
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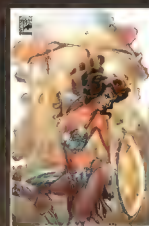
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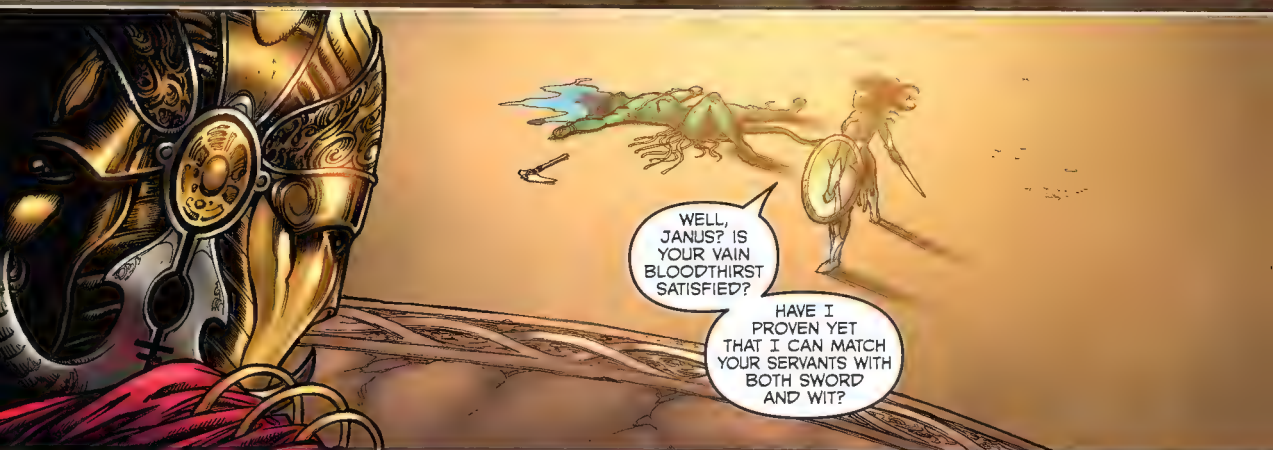
JANUS WAS RIGHT, YOU
KNOW. LIFE IS, INDEED,
CYCLICAL.

YOU ARE BORN INTO
THE UNIVERSE, INNOCENT
AND NEW...

YOU GROW, FIND LOVE,
BRING NEW LIFE INTO
THE WORLD...

AND IN THE END, IN
THE NORMAL COURSE
OF THINGS, YOU DIE.







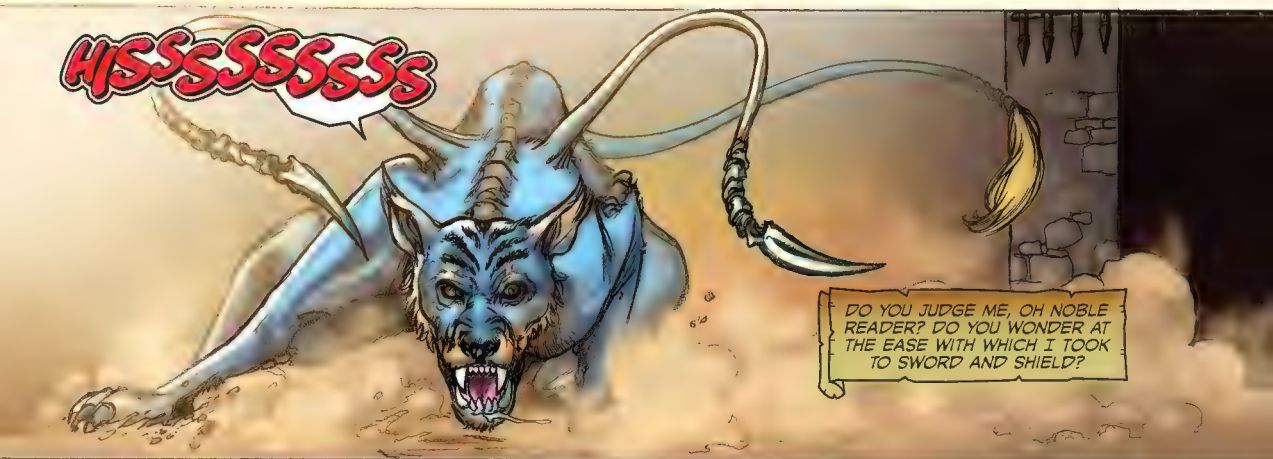


LET'S
MOVE,
LADS!

GET
DOWN TO THE
FLOOR!

HUH.
TOUGHER THAN
SHE LOOKS,
I'N'T SHE?

SAVE THE
CAPTAIN!



DO YOU JUDGE ME, OH NOBLE
READER? DO YOU WONDER AT
THE EASE WITH WHICH I TOOK
TO SWORD AND SHIELD?



DO NOT DECEIVE
YOURSELF: THIS
TALE IS ONLY THE
FIRST I'VE SET
DOWN. YOU DO NOT
YET KNOW WHAT I'M
CAPABLE OF

I LEARNED LONG
AGO TO BE RUTHLESS
WHEN NECESSARY.

HYAH!



I LEARNED TO DO
WHAT I HAD TO DO.

RRROOOWWWRR!

I LEARNED TO
SURVIVE.



I LEARNED
TO KILL.

YES!
MAGNIFICENT!

GR
KOOOOWWWW



THOUGH IT WAS NEVER
A SKILL THAT BROUGHT
ME GREAT PLEASURE.

HOW MANY
OF YOUR MINIONS
MUST I KILL IN
THIS GAME?



WHY IS HER FUTURE
STILL DARK? DO NOT
RECENT. I MUST SEE
THE ENDING!

PERHAPS
HER PAST IS
THE KEY.

MY DEAR,
I'VE USED THE
POWER OF THE SIRENS
WISELY OVER THE YEARS.
MY MENAGERIE OF
WARRIORS KNOWS
NO END.



"I WILL SEE YOUR LIFE
FULL CIRCLE TODAY. I WILL
KNOW YOUR END..."

AND YOUR
BEGINNING.



THAT PLACE WAS
FULL OF ENDINGS.

KRAZZZT

BUT OUR ARRIVAL THERE
ALLOWED FOR SOME NEW
BEGINNINGS AS WELL.

KRRRING

BIRTH, GROWTH,
DEATH... CHANGE.

KRASSH

KRAAASSH

CHANGE IS AN
INTEGRAL PART
OF THE CYCLE.

ARENA
MASTER, SEND
IN ANOTHER
FIGHTER

SHANK

YAH!!!

KRAK!

ANOTHER!

"HER STORY
REACHES INTO
THE DEPTHS OF
TIME.

"MORE, I MUST
SEE MORE.

ANOTHER!

GAH!

"AND WHY
DOES SHE
NOT AGE?

ANOTHER!

ANOTHER!!

ANOTHER!!

SPATCH

"DOES HER
TALE KNOW NO
BOUNDS?!?"



CHANGE IS
OFTEN VIOLENT.

THIS DAY WAS NO
DIFFERENT. SO MANY
LIVES LOST, BOTH THE
INNOCENT AND THE
BLAMEWORTHY.

MOVE
SMARTLY,
BOYS!



IT WAS NOT THE
BLOODIEST BATTLE
I'D EVER SEEN...

STAND
ASIDE!

HOLD FAST,
CAPTAIN!



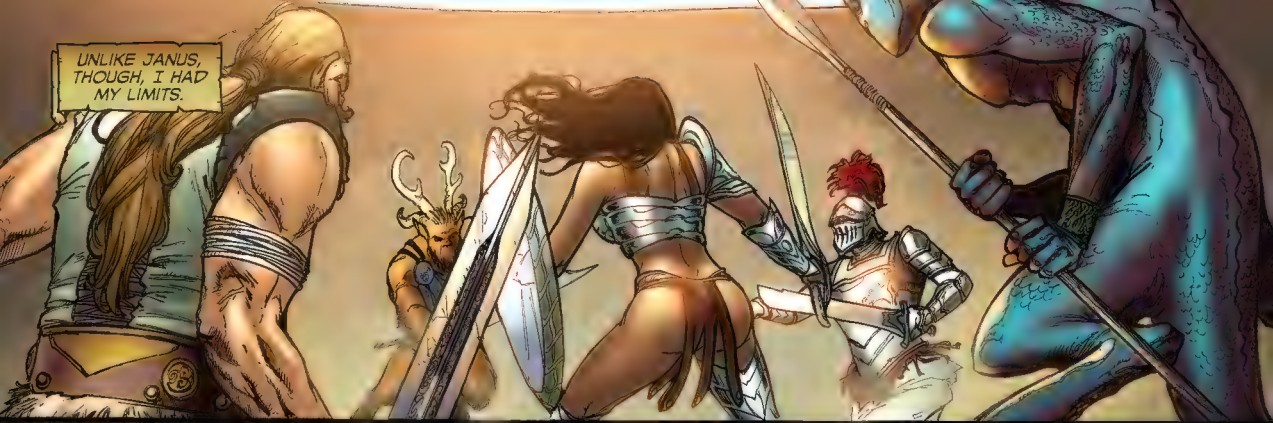
...AND I'VE ENDED
MORE LIVES IN LESS TIME
ELSEWHERE...

WHY
SACRIFICE
YOURSELVES
UPON THIS
FOOLISH
ALTAR?

FOR
GLORY!

FOR
JOY!

BUT HAVE NO DOUBTS, DEAR
READER - JANUS' APPETITE FOR
BLOODY ENDINGS WAS MORE
THAN SATISFIED THAT DAY.



UNLIKE JANUS,
THOUGH, I HAD
MY LIMITS.



KLANG

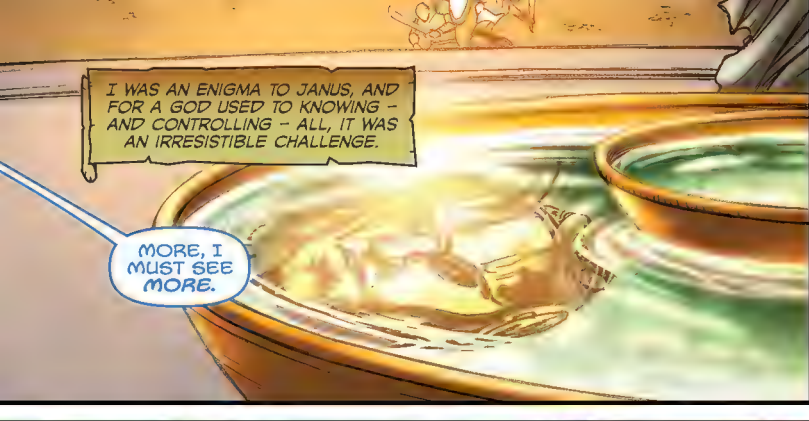
DEATH. BATTLE.
THEY TAKE THEIR
TOLL.

"SHE WEAKENS. MY
WARRIORS ARE
GAINING THE UPPER
HAND.



"YES, CLOSER
NOW. A QUEEN...

"...A THRONE WON
THROUGH DEATH."



I WAS AN ENIGMA TO JANUS, AND FOR A GOD USED TO KNOWING - AND CONTROLLING - ALL, IT WAS AN IRRESISTIBLE CHALLENGE.

MORE, I MUST SEE MORE.



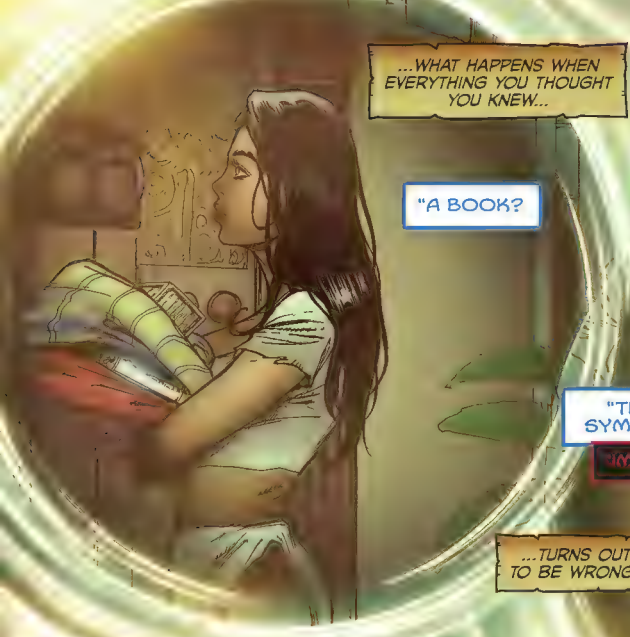
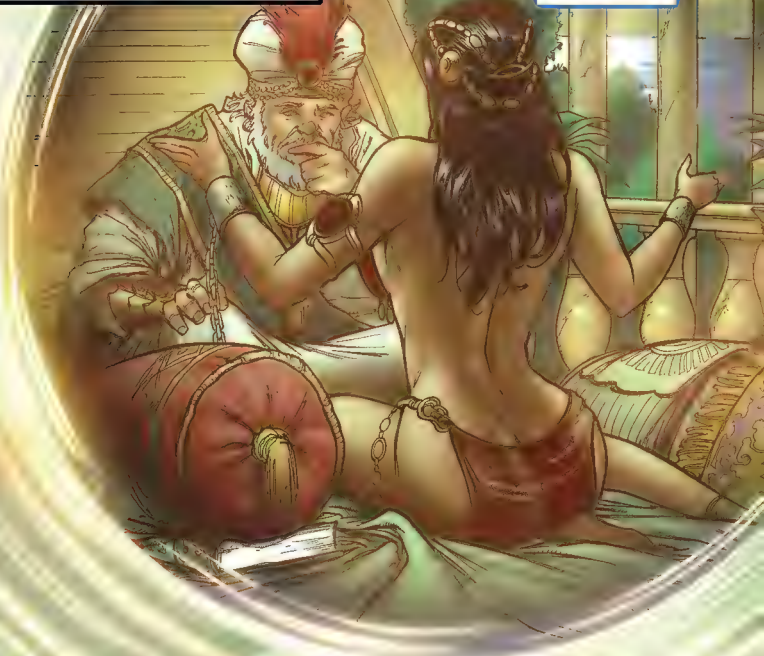
CLOSER NO STOPPING. I MUST KNOW!

"THE ANSWER IS WITHIN MY GRASP."



BUT IF POWER AND KNOWLEDGE DO INDEED GO HAND IN HAND...

"WHAT IS THIS, NOW?"



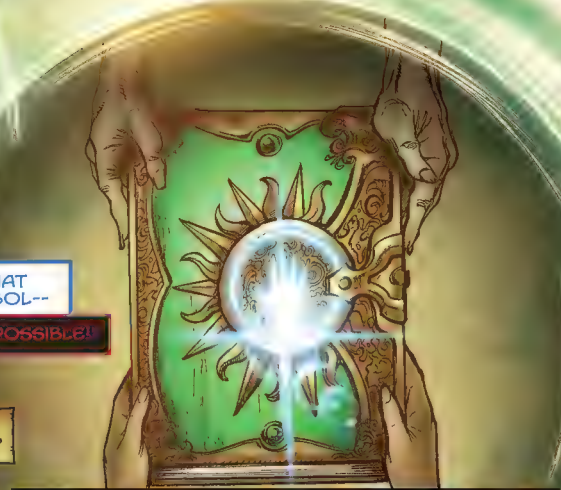
...WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW...

"A BOOK?"

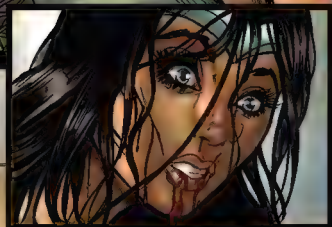
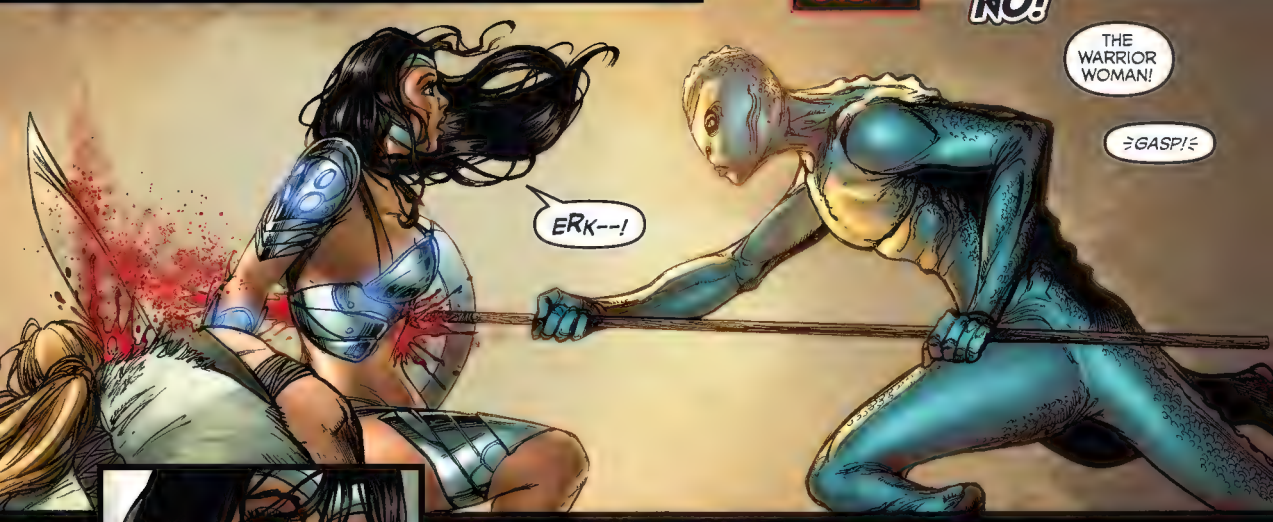
"THAT SYMBOL--"

IMPOSSIBLE!

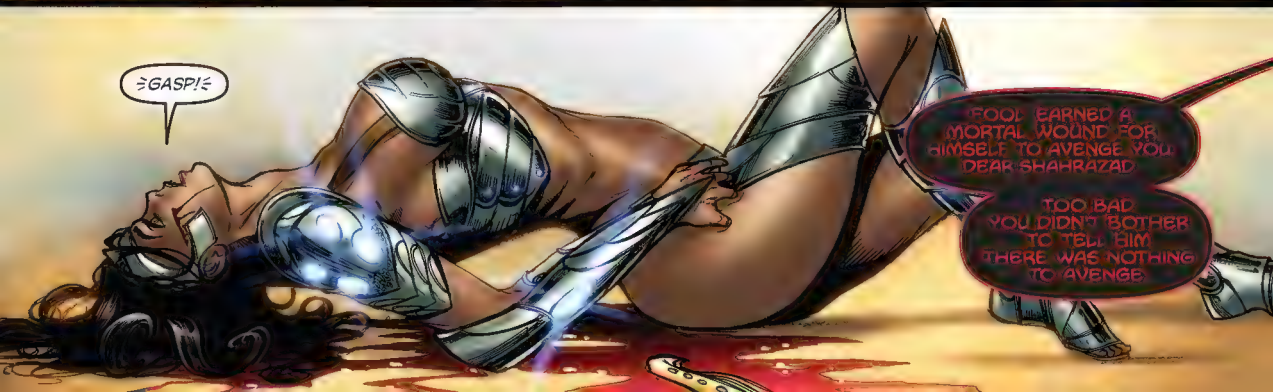
...TURNS OUT TO BE WRONG?



YOU SHOULD









JANUS, FOR ALL THE PAIN HE CAUSED ME, ALSO GAVE ME A GIFT.

THOSE PEOPLE, THOSE KEEPERS OF BOOKS, ARE GONE.

DESTROYED THEM.

AND YET, YOU'RE ONE OF THEM.

FABULATOR.

AIDOS.

HAKAWATI.

SCÉALAI.

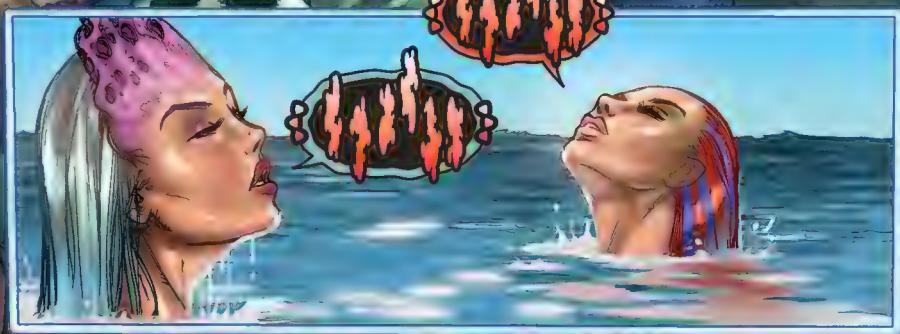
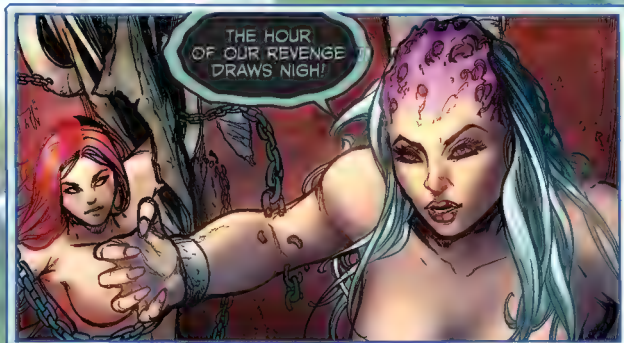
TARINAN KERTOGA.

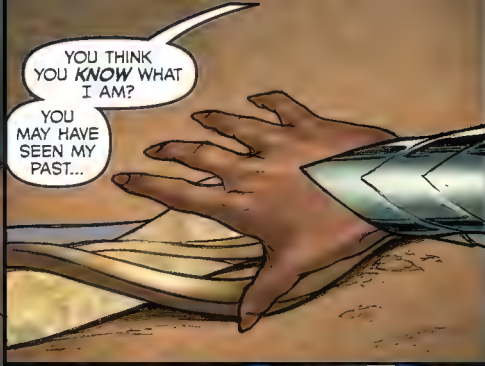
CUENTISTA.

WHAT?

STORYTELLER.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, I HAD A NAME FOR WHAT I HAD BECOME.





YOU THINK YOU *KNOW* WHAT I AM?

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN MY PAST...



...BUT YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF NOW.



I DO KNOW NOW WHAT YOU ARE, DEAR SHAHRAZAD. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, I KNOW THAT YOUR LIFE IS *MINE* BY FORFEIT.

ARE WE STILL PLAYING THAT GAME?

MY LIFE IS MY OWN. THE SOONER YOU RECOGNIZE IT, THE BETTER FOR BOTH OF US.



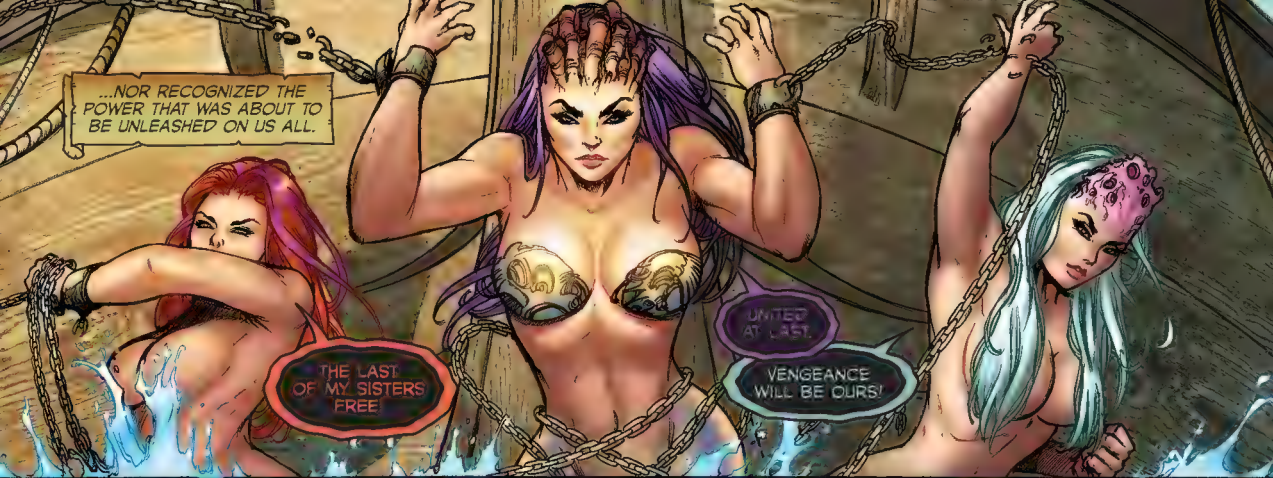
WRONG, POPPET. I CONTROL YOUR DESTINY. I DETERMINE YOUR FATE.

AND I HAVE DECIDED THIS:



YOUR STORY ENDS TODAY!

CAUGHT IN THE THREADS OF OUR OWN TALE, NEITHER JANUS NOR I NOTICED THE SKIES DARKENING OVERHEAD...



A comic book illustration showing three mermaids swimming underwater. The mermaid in the center has purple skin and a crown of purple seashells. The mermaid on the left has orange and purple hair, and the one on the right has purple hair. They are all looking forward with serious expressions. Below them, a shark is swimming towards them, its mouth wide open, showing sharp teeth. The background is a deep blue ocean with some green seaweed visible at the top.

WE SHOULD HAVE HEEDED
THE SIREN'S WARNING. HER
MUMBLINGS OF SONGS AND
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.

PERHAPS WE COULD HAVE
STOPPED THE COMING STORM.
THOUGH WHAT GOOD WOULD IT
HAVE DONE BY THEN? COULD WE
HAVE TRULY GRANTED ANYONE IN
THAT PLACE A BETTER ENDING?

NO, THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO
DWELL ON HINDSIGHT. NOT NOW
THAT MY TALE HAS REACHED THIS
PIVOTAL MOMENT.

IT IS AS I BEGAN: WHO COULD
HAVE KNOWN THAT SOMETHING AS
SIMPLE AS THE SONG OF A BEAUTIFUL
CREATURE WOULD BRING SUCH
DISASTER UPON US ALL?

CERTAINLY NOT I. AFTER
ALL, I HAD OTHER WORRIES
AT THAT MOMENT...

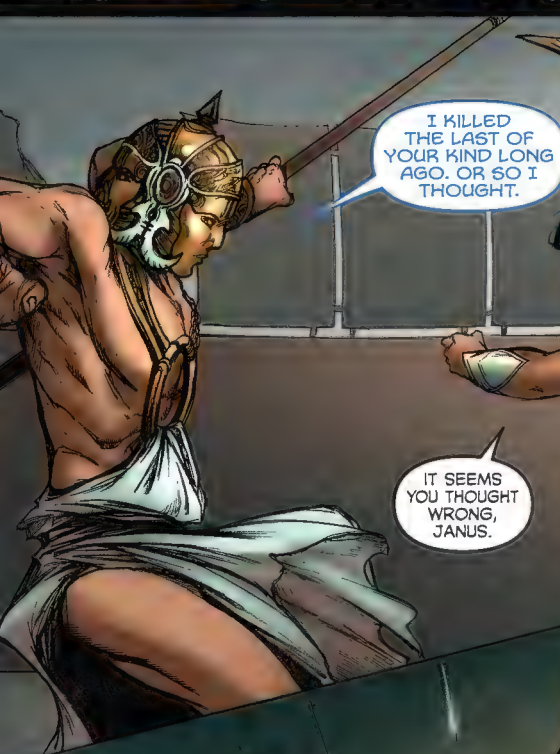


ARE YOU SO SURE YOU HAVE THE POWER TO END ME?

KLAWNG



I AM THE GOD OF BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS. YOU ARE THE PRODUCT OF INTERFERENCE INTO MY DOMAIN.



I KILLED THE LAST OF YOUR KIND LONG AGO. OR SO I THOUGHT.

IT SEEMS YOU THOUGHT WRONG, JANUS.



AN ERROR EASILY---

--WHAT IS THIS?



THEY DARE DEFY ME, TOO?!

TO BE CONTINUED...

SHAHRAZAD

“Machine Gun Pirate”

BY KARI CASTOR



Mr. Sarmaan started out as a bit of a gag. When we wrote the scene back in issue #1, where Shahrazad consults with the captain and crew about the plans to abandon ship, we asked Mike to use a classic Golden Age of Piracy look as the basis for the majority of our buccaneer cast. At the time, we didn't have any names or real grand plans for most of these characters, aside from the bosun (who never actually really materialized in the story) and a midshipman (whom we get our first glimpse of on the next page, as he climbs into a lifeboat). We knew we wanted the captain in a fancy hat and epaulets, and we knew we had to have a pirate with an eyepatch in there somewhere — you can't have a pirate crew without at least one eyepatch! And we made one more, slightly oddball, request, based on a suggestion made by my husband, Aaron: throw in a pirate with a machine gun. A riff on the modern Somali pirates who were making the news so frequently a few years ago, thanks to their frequent attacks on and hijackings of vessels traversing the Indian Ocean.

In the beginning, we referred to him simply as “machine gun pirate.” We mentioned him once or twice in our directions to Mike, so we knew he made it to the island after the storm destroyed the ship, but we had no idea how central a figure he would become to the story. As I watched him take shape in Mike's drawings, and as we plotted out the next pieces of the story, it

quickly became clear to me that machine gun pirate was going to outstrip his humble origin. It's something that happens to most writers, I think — sometimes a character, one you perhaps didn't expect, just seems to grab hold of his or her own story and demand that you tell it. So it was with Sarmaan.

Kim, if I recall correctly, suggested killing Sarmaan off earlier in the story (during the bug attack in the jungle, maybe?). And I knew that Sarmaan was doomed, had known it for a long time already, but I also knew that death by giant bug was much too ignominious. So as various disasters befell our crew, I made clear notes to Mike that Sarmaan (and the midshipman, and Jennings, too, who was initially known as “eyepatch pirate”) was to survive each encounter, that I wasn't finished with him. Until we reached this issue, that is, and the time came for Sarmaan's story to come to a close.

From humble beginnings, he became one of my favorite characters in this story, and I was genuinely sad when I wrote his death. Rest well, Mr. Sarmaan.



#5
OF 5



Vol. 1 | Cov A

Kim HUTCHISON
Kari CASTOR
Mike KROME
Net RUFFINO

Shahrazad





#5
OF 5

Shahrazad



Vol. 1 | Cov B

KIM HUTCHISON
KARI CASTOR
MIKE KROME
NEI RUFFINO



Shahrazad

VOLUME ONE

STORY BY:
TOM HUTCHISON, KIM HUTCHISON, KARI CASTOR,
WITH AARON CASTOR AND BRETT CATE

WRITTEN BY:
KIM HUTCHISON AND KARI CASTOR

PENCILS BY:
MIKE KROME

COLORS BY:
NEI RUFFINO

LETTERING BY:
HDE

A BIG DOG INK PRODUCTION
SHAHRAZAD CREATED BY
TOM HUTCHISON AND BRETT CATE,
WITH CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM J. SCOTT CAMPBELL



DIRECT EDITION
BY
MIKE KROME
& NEI RUFFINO



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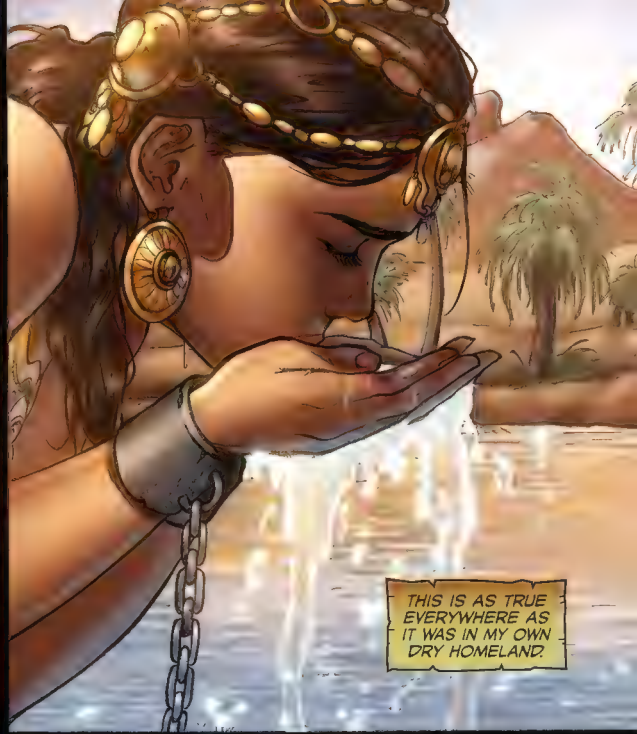
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WATER
IS LIFE.



THIS IS AS TRUE
EVERYWHERE AS
IT WAS IN MY OWN
DRY HOMELAND.



EVERY DROP HAS THE
POWER TO CHANGE
WORLDS.



TO
CREATE.
RENEW.



OR
DESTROY.

IN ALL OF ITS ROLES, THOUGH, THROUGH ALL OF MY YEARS, I HAD NEVER SEEN WATER WIELD SUCH POWER AS IT DID THAT DAY.

NO...

...I
HAVEN'T
CALLED THE
STORM.

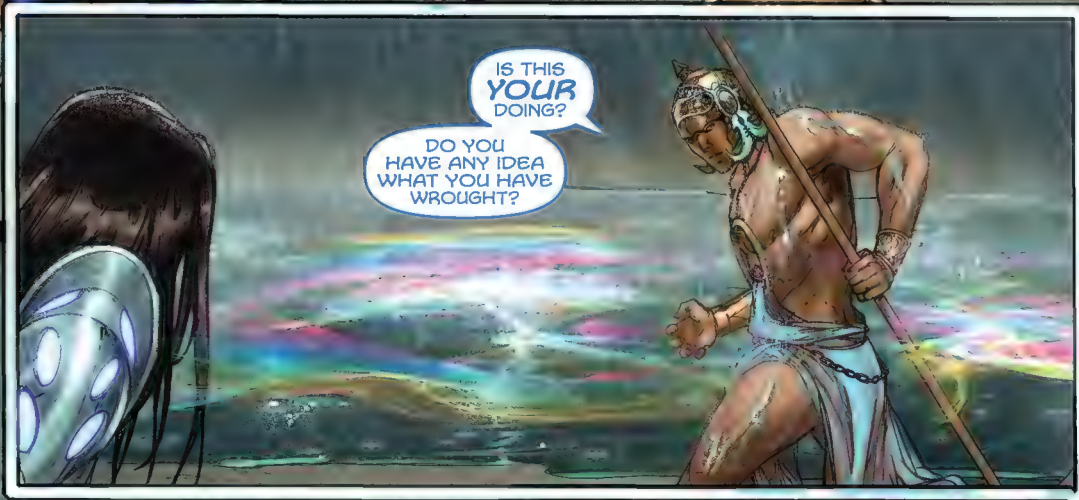
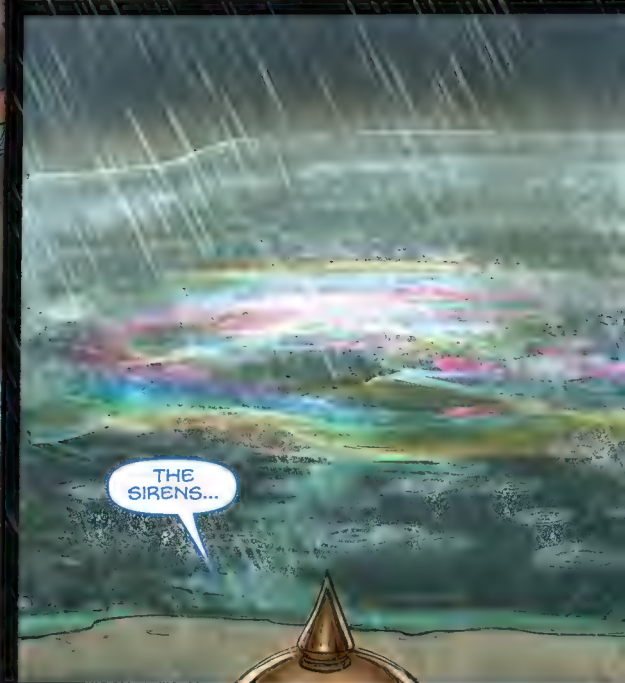
YAAIIII!

THIS
SHOULD NOT BE
HAPPENING.

I HAVE NOT
COMMANDED YOU
TO SING!

THIS CANNOT
HAPPEN...

...I
OWN
YOU.



IT SEEMED I WOULD
FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH,
ANYWAY.

WHAT'S
GOING ON?

IS THAT
SUPPOSED TO
HAPPEN?

SO MUCH
WATER!

WHERE'S
IT ALL COMING
FROM?

କିଏ ଏହିପ୍ରକାର
କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ?

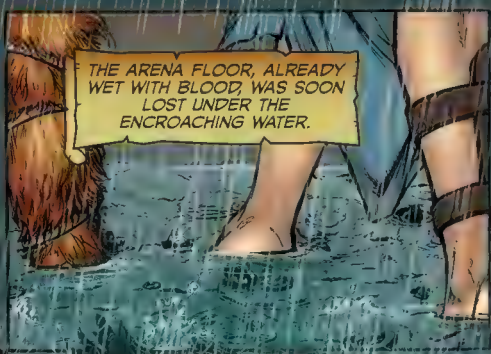
NO, I'M PRETTY
SURE THAT'S NOT
SUPPOSED TO BE
HAPPENING.

HE'S
GONE,
LAD.

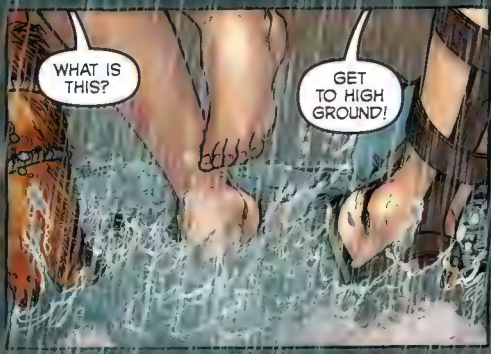
BUT THE
CAPTAIN CAME
BACK. DO YOU
THINK--?

NO. I
DON'T. SHAHRAZAD...
SHE'S SOMETHING...
DIFFERENT.

COME ON,
TO YOUR FEET
NOW. THERE'LL BE
TIME TO MOURN
LATER...



THE ARENA FLOOR, ALREADY
WET WITH BLOOD, WAS SOON
LOST UNDER THE
ENCROACHING WATER.



WHAT IS
THIS?

GET
TO HIGH
GROUND!



RAAWWK

AND THERE WE WERE -
PIRATES, GLADIATORS, GODS
AND BEASTS ALIKE - LEFT
WONDERING WHAT STRANGE
TIDES HAD BEEN SET
IN MOTION.



WHAT HORRORS
SHOULD I EXPECT
THIS TIME, O LORD
JANUS? MORE SEA
BEASTS? SAVAGE
WARRIORS?

FOR NOW,
LADY, BEST
FOCUS ON THE
LIVING.

SOB:
AYE AYE,
SIR.

THIS CHAOS IS
OF YOUR MAKING,
SHAHRAZAD.
REMEMBER THAT.



THIS IS YOUR
FAULT, ALL OF IT -
THE DEATHS OF
YOUR BELOVED
CREWMATES.

MY GLADIATORS.
ALL THE LIVES LOST.
THEY ARE ON YOUR
CONSCIENCE.

THIS IS THE
PRICE YOU PAY
WHEN YOU DEFEY
MY NATURAL
ORDER!

I USED TO WONDER IF
JANUS WAS RIGHT. AND
IF I'M BEING HONEST,
DEAR READER, AT TIMES
I STILL DO.

BUT I COULD NOT
SEE MY FUTURE, ANY
MORE THAN EITHER OF
JANUS' FACES COULD.



AND NONE THAT I'VE
ENCOUNTERED CAN SEE
BEYOND THE BRANCHES
IN THE PATH.

WE MUST ALL OF US LEARN
TO LIVE WITH OUR CHOICES
AND OUR PASTS.

FREEDOM
IS SWEET, BUT
REVENGE WILL
BE SWEETER.
BLUE WATER
WILL RUN
RED.

AND NONE THAT I'VE
ENCOUNTERED CAN SEE
BEYOND THE BRANCHES
IN THE PATH.

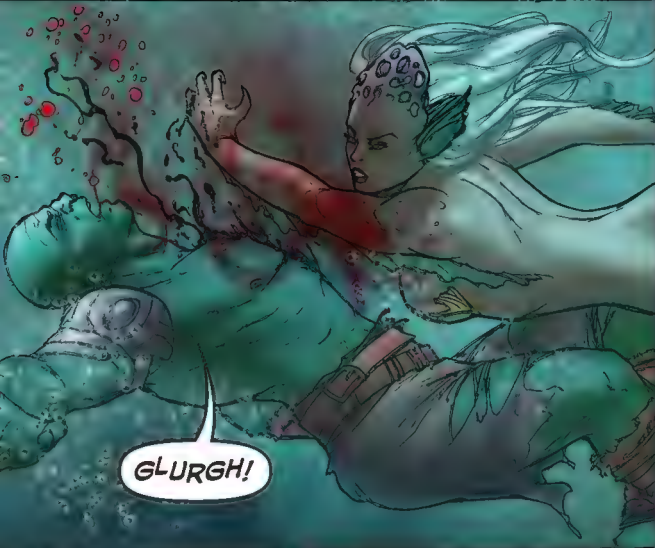
FREEDOM
IS SWEET, BUT
REVENGE WILL
BE SWEETER.
BLUE WATER
WILL RUN
RED.



WHAT--?
NO!



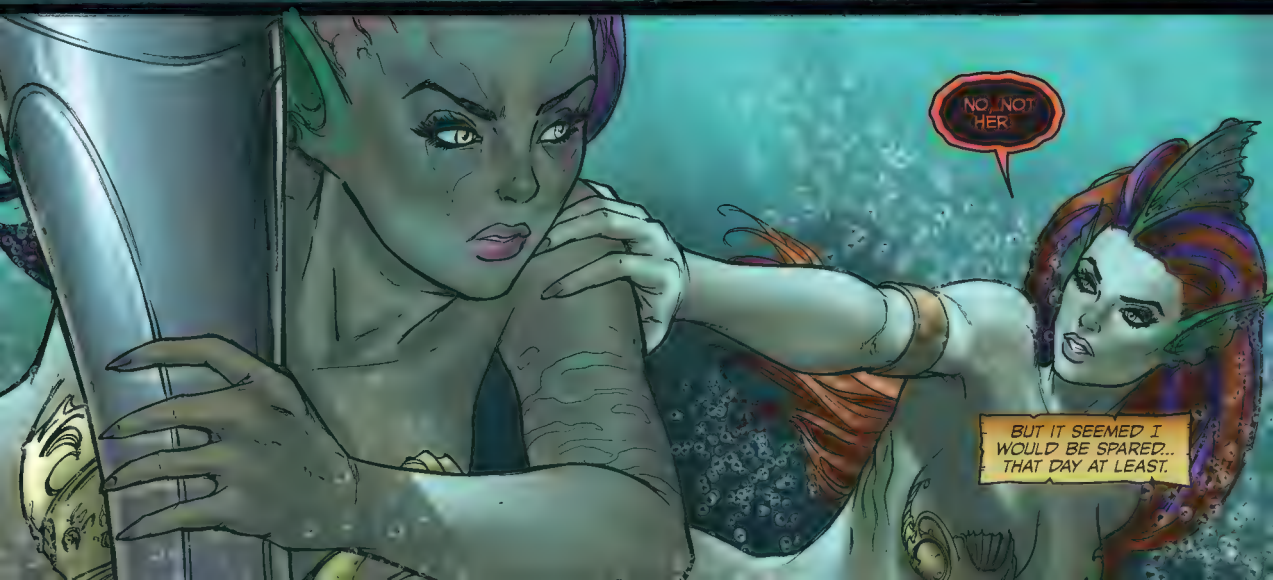
A BRUSH OF
COLD FINGERS
AGAINST MY
LEG...



GLURGH!



CLAWED HANDS
GRIPPING TIGHTLY...



**NO...NOT
HER!**

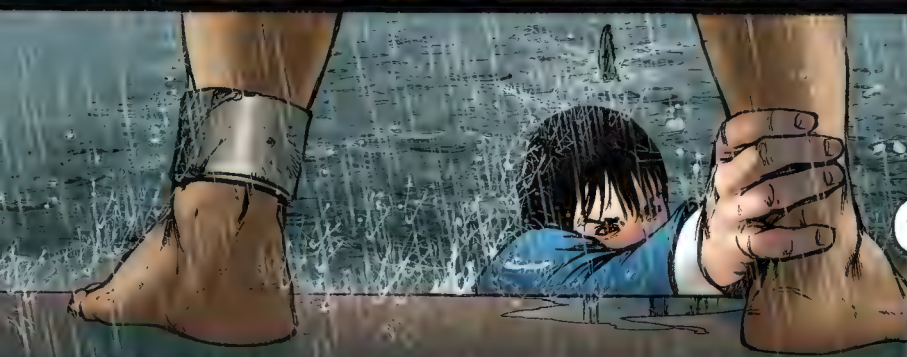
BUT IT SEEMED I
WOULD BE SPARED..
THAT DAY AT LEAST.



DAMNED SCALY FISH. I KNEW BRINGING THOSE MONSTERS HERE WAS A BAD IDEA.



HEY! THAT'S THE **CAPTAIN'S** GUN!



WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LET GO!



I CAN'T SWIM, YOU LITTLE BASTARD!

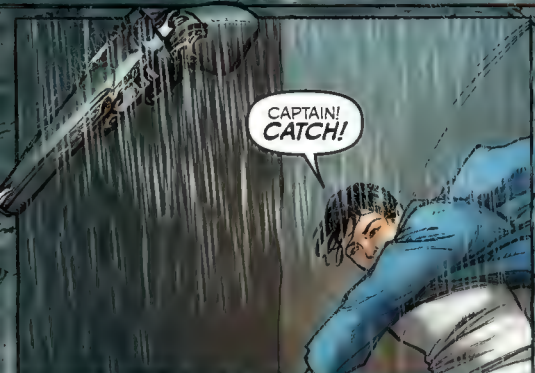


SPUTTER

HELP!
HELP ME!



HEEEHELP!

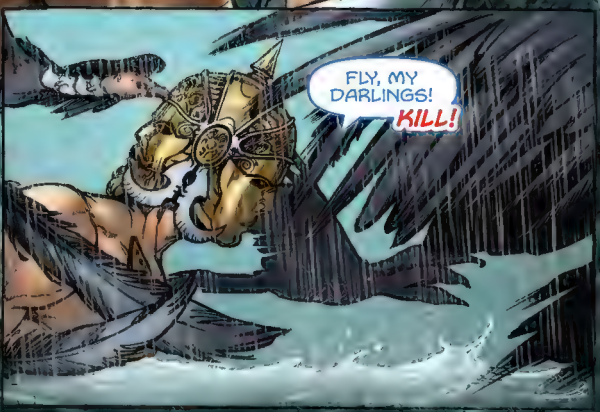


CAPTAIN!
CATCH!

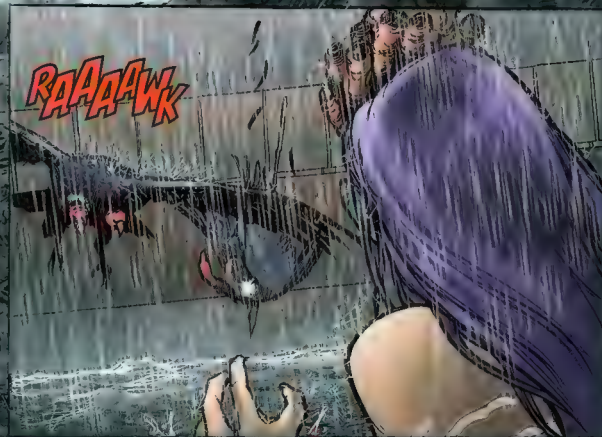


HELLO,
OLD FRIEND

HOW NICE
OF HIM TO RELOAD
YOU FOR ME ON HIS
WAY OUT.



FLY, MY
DARLINGS!
KILL!





KRAAAWK

LET GO!

FACE ME, THEN, INSTEAD OF HIDING UNDER-WATER!

AAAIIIEEE!

BACKS TOGETHER, BOYS!

DIE, YOU FREAK!

SPLAASH



SNIK

I SAID
FACE ME
YOU 'FENDS!

YOU SEE, WE ALL
HAVE OUR STORIES.
AND OUR DEMONS.

JANUS', ESPECIALLY
WERE OF HIS OWN
MAKING.

NO!
I HAVE NOT
FORESEEN
THIS!

SO THAT WHEN HE
BEGAN TO LOSE CONTROL,
HE WAS LEFT SHATTERED.

HIS PLAYGROUND BROKEN
AND FRAGMENTED HIS
ADORING CROWD REDUCED
TO PANDEMONIUM. HIS PETS
TORN ASUNDER.

A dramatic comic book illustration of Janus, a man with a golden face and a crown, emerging from a turbulent, stormy sea. He is holding a long, dark staff or scepter. The sea is dark and swirling with white foam from the waves. In the background, other figures are partially visible, including one with a red headband and another with a green headband. The overall mood is intense and chaotic.

FOR PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME
IN HIS IMMORTAL LIFE, JANUS'
PLANS WERE ALL IN DISARRAY.

THIS
CANNOT BE
HAPPENING.

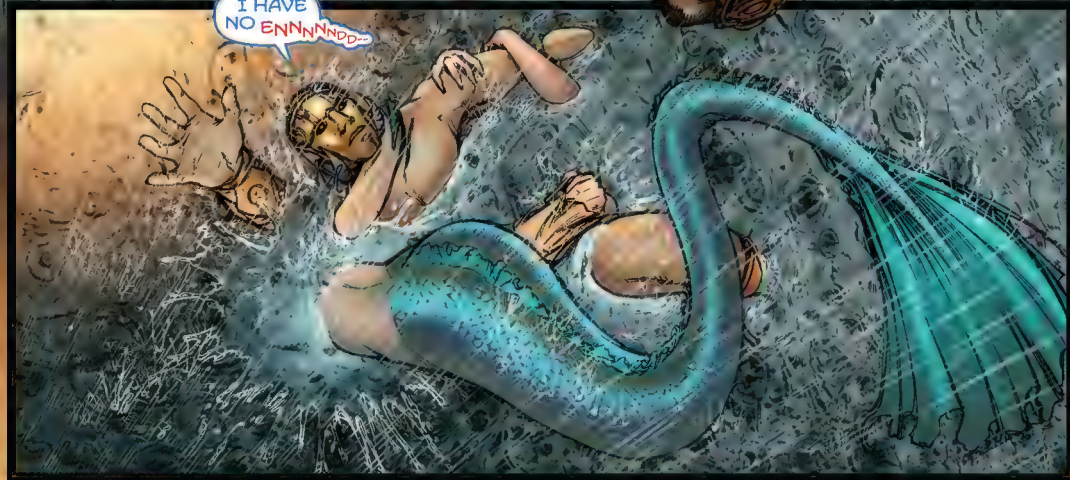
HIS GRIP ON THE PAST, PRESENT, AND
FUTURE - FOR THE MOMENT, ALL
LOST, ALONG WITH HIS BORROWED
POWER OVER THE POOLS.

I AM JANUS,
GOD OF BEGINNINGS
AND ENDINGS.

I AM YOUR
MASTER!

I
ORDER
YOU TO
STOP.

JANUS' REALITY WAS FRACTURED
BY A POWER GREATER THAN HIS
OWN. IT IS AN OLD TALE, GENTLE
READER, AND ONE I KNOW WELL...
BUT I DIGRESS. THIS IS NOT MY
STORY. AT LEAST, NOT MINE ALONE.





AND THEN HE
WAS GONE, AND
THE SIRENS TOO.



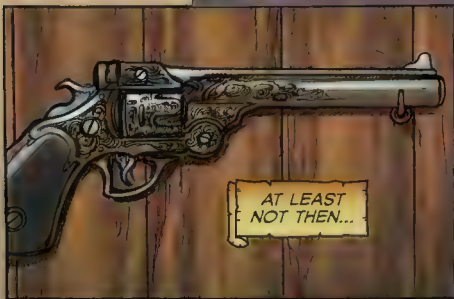
THE GLADIATORS, THE
WATER, THE POOLS -
ALL DISAPPEARED.

HOLD ON TIGHT,
SOMEONE PULLED
THE PLUG. DON'T GET
DRAGGED DOWN!

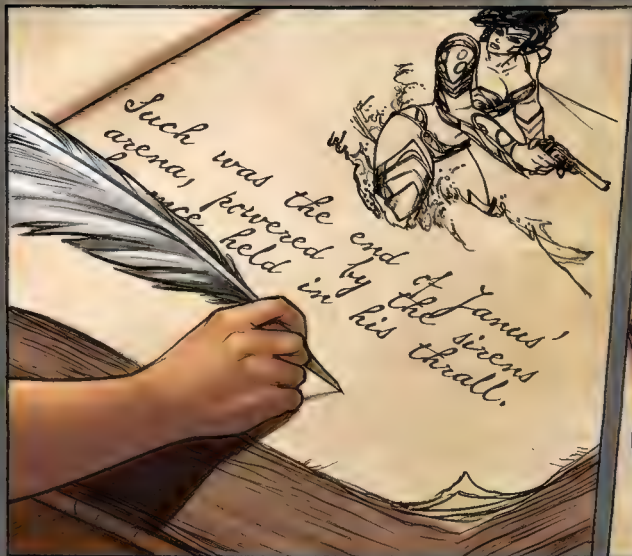
DON'T FANCY
ENDING UP WHEREVER
THE FISH WOMEN AND
THE ROMAN HAVE GOT
TO MYSELF, THAT'S
FOR SURE.



AND WE HAD NO IDEA
WHERE THEY HAD GONE.



OTHER LIFETIMES WOULD PASS BEFORE I LEARNED OF JANUS' FATE.



"I BELIEVE THIS IS YOURS. THE BOY INSISTED ON FISHING IT OUT OF THE WATER FOR YE."

"DON'T IMAGINE ANYONE WOULD OPPOSE YOUR RIGHT TO WEAR IT, NOT AFTER ALL THIS. CAPTAIN."

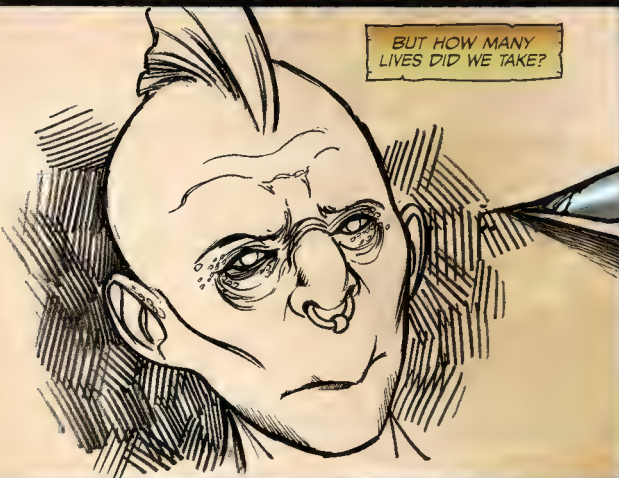
"THANK YOU, MR. JENNINGS. I'LL KEEP THE HAT, I THINK, BUT I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND IF I CEDE THE PROMOTION TO YOU AFTER ALL."

WE PARTED ON THAT BEACH. ONE CHAPTER IN MY TALE CONCLUDED.

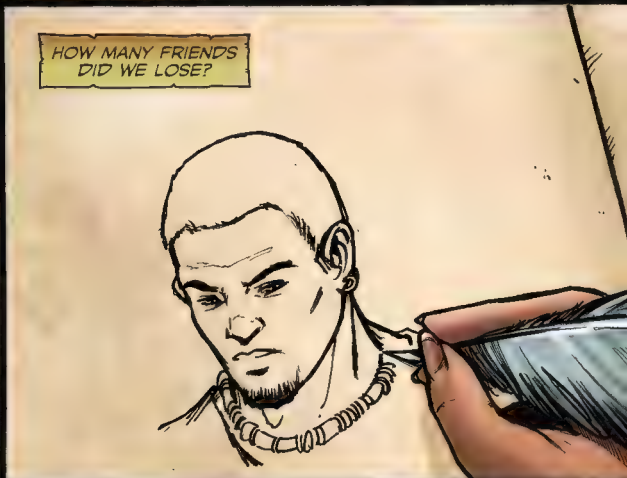
HOW MANY PEOPLE
GET TO FACE OFF
AGAINST THE GODS
AND DECLARE
VICTORY, OF A SORT?



BUT HOW MANY
LIVES DID WE TAKE?



HOW MANY FRIENDS
DID WE LOSE?



FRIENDS... AND
LOVERS, ALL GONE,
AND FOR WHAT?



WHAT WAS
THE POINT OF
IT ALL?



WAS I THE
CAUSE OF THIS?



THIS IS HARDER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE. THE RETELLING OF THE PAST.

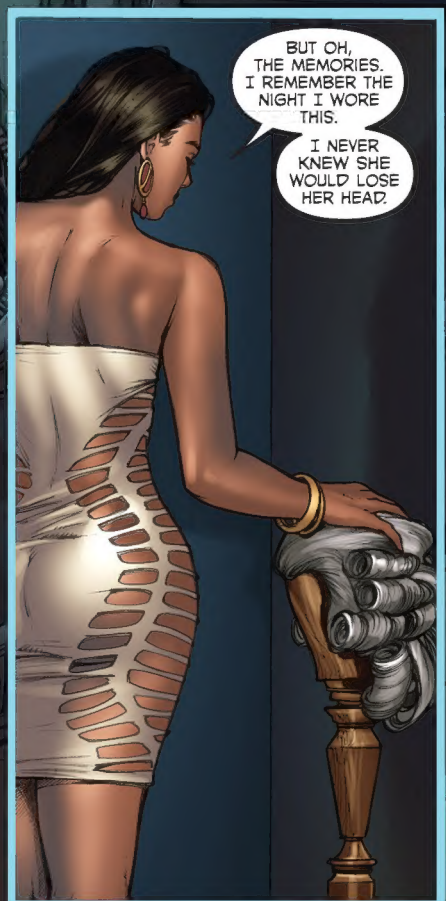


IT'S USELESS. THIS WON'T FIX ANYTHING. I DON'T CARE WHAT THE MADWOMAN SAID.



THERE ARE TOO MANY MEMORIES, TOO MANY THREADS WAITING TO DRAW ME BACK. LYING IN WAIT, READY TO CONFUSE PRESENT WITH PAST.

I SHOULD FACE REALITY, OR WHAT LITTLE REALITY I HAVE LEFT TO HOLD.



BUT OH, THE MEMORIES. I REMEMBER THE NIGHT I WORE THIS.

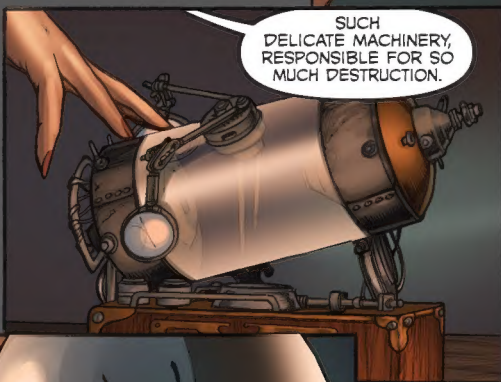
I NEVER KNEW SHE WOULD LOSE HER HEAD.



AND HERE,
A SOUVENIR OF
A LOVELY MEAL
WITH FRIENDS.



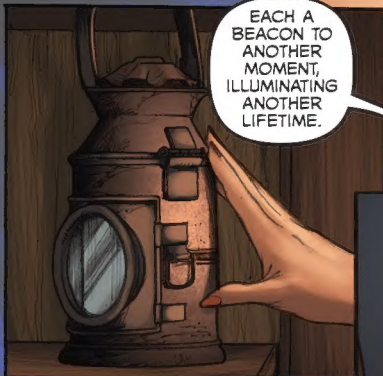
AH, YES, FRIENDS.
I SUPPOSE MOST WOULD
HAVE CALLED THEM
MONSTERS.



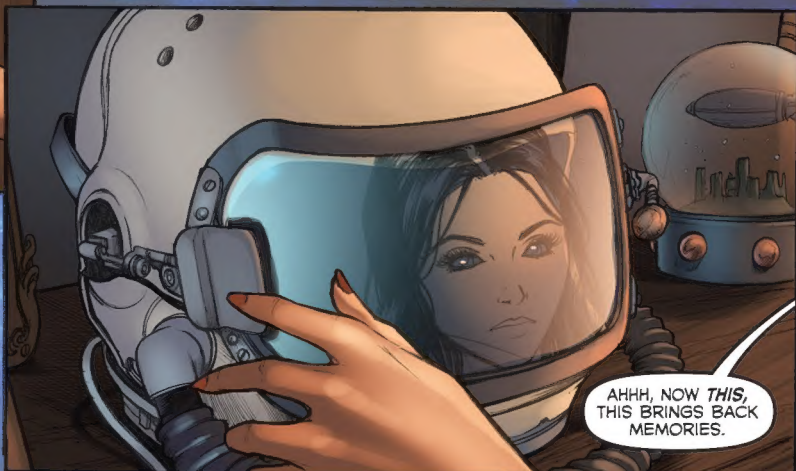
SUCH
DELICATE MACHINERY,
RESPONSIBLE FOR SO
MUCH DESTRUCTION.

AND YOU, LITTLE
ONE, YOU LINGERED IN
MYTHS AND LEGENDS
FOR YEARS AFTER I
ENCOUNTERED YOU.

ALL OF MY
TREASURES, SMALL
GLIMPSES INTO THIS LIFE
THAT'S GONE ON FAR
TOO LONG.



EACH A
BEACON TO
ANOTHER
MOMENT,
ILLUMINATING
ANOTHER
LIFETIME.



AHHH, NOW *THIS*,
THIS BRINGS BACK
MEMORIES.

"PERHAPS I *DO*
HAVE ANOTHER
STORY TO TELL..."



**THE END
VOLUME ONE**

SHAHRAZAD

“The Madwoman” BY KARI CASTOR



The last few pages of this issue were among the most difficult to write. We wanted to begin letting the reader in on some of the secrets we'd been hinting at, but, at the same time, we also knew that we weren't ready yet to give too much away — we wanted to show a few of our cards, but not all of them! So we have the juicy tidbit about the “madwoman,” and references to other stories and events from Shahrazad's life that you might just get to read about someday. We have left you some clues, and hopefully

plenty of questions. Trying to strike the right balance in that, to drop some hints without being frustratingly cryptic, was something we felt we had to be very thoughtful and intentional about.

I think, in revisiting those pages, that we succeeded in that. And thus you'll notice, if you get the chance to compare this remastered edition to the original, that these pages remain the same. (Mind you, these aren't the only pages this is true of, but I think these are particularly worth noting.)

I wrote, in my commentary for issue I, that “Shahrazad tests my limits, it forces me to find creative solutions and to grow as a writer to overcome problems I wouldn't have encountered otherwise.” In remastering these five issues, I have been reminded over and over of how true that is — things that wouldn't have occurred to me back in the beginning are suddenly obvious in retrospect.

Writing Shahrazad has been an honor and a privilege, and remastering it has been truly exciting, the sort of opportunity any kind of creator is rarely afforded. If I'm proud of what Shahrazad was originally, I'm over the moon to have you holding the final issue of the remastered original series in your hand right now, because (and I realize I'm biased) I think we've created, and re-created, something really exceptional here, for which I can only take a little slice of the credit. Without Kim, or Mike, or Nei, or HdE, or any of the other people who played a role in the creation of this thing, you wouldn't be holding the same book in your hands right now. I don't know if it could possibly be as good. But as our titular heroine reminds us, none of us get to “see beyond the branches in the path.” And that's ok. Because the path we wound up on brought us here, to the book you're holding. And I'm happy with that.

I hope you are too. And I hope you're excited to see where the path leads next. Because I can't wait.
